

King inaugurates new security unit

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Monday inaugurated the new premises of a preventive security unit and was briefed by its commander on its duties and activities. King Abdullah was received upon arrival at the unit's headquarters by Public Security Department Director Lt. General Nasouh Muhiyeddin, the department's inspector general, and senior officers. King Abdullah watched several military and martial arts exercises. The King was accompanied by Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية. الراي

'Palestinian village being de facto annexed by Jerusalem'

WALADIA (AFP) — A West Bank Palestinian village lying between Jerusalem and Bethlehem accused the Jerusalem municipality Monday of creeping annexation by a policy of harassment. "The Israeli municipality of Jerusalem is trying to create all sorts of facts on the ground to annex Waladja," the village's mayor, Mustafa Abu Tin, told AFP. He said the municipal authorities had already pulled down 15 houses in the village built without permission from the Israelis, and ordered the demolition of another 28. "This Monday, inspectors from the Jerusalem municipality came to tell us that unless there was a court order to the contrary, a road just built between us and [the neighbouring village of] Beit Jala will also be destroyed," said Abu Tin.

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Car blast kills N. Irish rights lawyer

BELFAST (R) — One of Northern Ireland's best known Catholic human rights lawyers was killed on Monday by a car bomb that cast a pall over faltering peace efforts in the troubled British province. Rosemary Nelson, who had defended Irish Republicans in several high-profile court cases, died in hospital from injuries sustained after a device exploded under her car in the town of Lurgan, 50 km southwest of Belfast. Nelson, married with three children, had been in the public eye for several years as the legal representative of residents in an Irish nationalist enclave in the flashpoint town of Portadown.

Legionnaire's disease kills nine in Netherlands

THE HAGUE (AFP) — Up to nine people may have died from Legionnaire's disease in the Netherlands, after the airborne bacteria spread through a flower show, health minister Els Borst said on Monday. Four of the nine victims were confirmed to have died from the deadly disease, while autopsies are still being performed on the other five, she said. More than 40 people are also sick with the illness, and the minister expressed shock at the rapidly rising number of casualties.

U.N. helicopter with 13 aboard missing in Haiti

UNITED NATIONS (R) — A U.N.-chartered helicopter with 13 people aboard went missing in Haiti on Sunday night, the United Nations announced on Monday. U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said the 13 included six Russians, six Argentines and one American. The Mi-8 Russian helicopter, contracted by a U.S. company, left the capital Port-Au-Prince for Cap-Haitien, the country's second largest city, he said.

Students detained for anti-Syrian leaflets

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanese police on Monday detained five students who were distributing anti-Syrian leaflets at a Beirut university, witnesses said. They said dozens of students demonstrated at St. Joseph University after police stormed the campus, located in east Beirut, and took away five of their colleagues. The students, some of them followers of Christian leader Michel Aoun, had been passing out the anti-Syrian leaflets with other and Israeli pamphlets to commemorate the twenty-first anniversary of the Jewish state's 1978 invasion of Lebanon.

Peruvian burnt by nuclear material in his pocket

VIENNA (AFP) — A Peruvian man suffered "serious" radiation burns after carrying radioactive material in his trouser pocket for six hours, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said Monday. IAEA spokesman David Kyd said the man, an employee of a hydro-electric power station, found a rod of Iridium 92 in a field and carried it home, keeping it in the back pocket of his trousers for around six hours. He did not say where in Peru the "serious incident" occurred but said it rated three on the agency's seven-point radioactive emergency scale. The man's life was not in danger, Kyd said, although he had been admitted to hospital for prolonged treatment of his burns. The man's family was also slightly irradiated.

Court sentences two to death for high-profile 1998 murders

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — The State Security Court on Monday ended a highly-charged trial by sentencing two men to death and two others to 20 years in prison for their roles in what have become known as the "Rabia and Shmeisani" murders.

Under extremely tight security, the court tribunal handed down the sentences against the two defendants, including one tried in absentia, found guilty of murdering 12 people in two separate incidents last year.

Guarded in the defendants' cage and wearing bullet-proof vests, the main suspect, Mohammad Jaghameen, 35, as well as defendants Wael Khalil, 23, and Kayed Mohammad, 42, displayed no emotion when they heard their sentences read out by presiding Judge Youssef Faouri.

Jaghameen received the death sentence while Khalil and Mohammad were given 20 years with hard labour for complicity in the murders. The fifth suspect, Ahmad Mohammad Subeh, 24, tried in absentia, received the death sentence.

The Jan. 17, 1998 crime in a villa in the Rabia district of Amman left dead Iraqi charge d'affaires Hikmat Hajou, 51, his wife Laila Sha'ban, Iraqi businessmen Namir Ochi, 50, Sami George, 43, the villa owner, Sadeq Salim, Sadeq Sadiq and two Egyptian employ-



Mohammad Jaghameen, Kayed Mohammad and Wael Khalil (R to L) listen Monday to the verdict during their trial at the State Security Court in Amman (AFP photo)

ees, Mohammad Hindawi and Shahbour Sayed. A Greek woman, Anastasia Zaki, 37, was the sole survivor of the mass murder.

The April 8 Shmeisani murder victims included prominent lawyer Hanna Nadeh, his son Suhail and psychiatrist Awni Sa'ad.

The 12th victim was Luay Hajibi, a taxi driver who was allegedly an accomplice to the crimes.

The fifth suspect, Ahmad Mohammad Subeh, 24, tried in absentia, received the death sentence. The Jan. 17, 1998 crime in a villa in the Rabia district of Amman left dead Iraqi charge d'affaires Hikmat Hajou, 51, his wife Laila Sha'ban, Iraqi businessmen Namir Ochi, 50, Sami George, 43, the villa owner, Sadeq Salim, Sadeq Sadiq and two Egyptian employ-

Reading from the 167 page-ruling, Judge Faouri added that "the court proceedings proved that the

defendants said they wanted to fight for God" by killing Christians, Jews and Free Masons.

"The defendants permitted themselves to issue fatwas and commit heinous crimes against innocent people, and attempted to fuel hatred between the different sectors in society with their actions," the judge said.

According to the charge sheet, Jaghameen, who resided in Iraq until the end of 1997, befriended Ochi after renting a restaurant from him.

The four defendant forced their way into the home of Sami George, tied him up, slit his throat and stabbed him to death.

The defendants then waited for their other victims to arrive at the villa then stabbed and killed each of

them as they entered the house, the charge sheet said.

The four defendants later searched the villa for valuables, and fled with some gold and electronic equipment, according to the prosecution.

On April 5, the defendants killed taxi driver Hajibi because he would not cooperate with them in the murders, the prosecution said.

"The suspects took him to a deserted area in Wadi Seer, shot him with a machine gun, took JD50 from his person, hurried him, then dumped the taxi in the Abu Nusseir area," the charge sheet said.

According to the prosecutor, three days later, the defendants entered Awni Sa'ad's clinic, attacked him, tied him up, then started questioning him. In the meantime, Hanna Nadeh and his son Suhail arrived at the clinic, the prosecution said.

"The suspects tied them all up and shot them all with an automatic silenced machine gun, took JD300 from the person of Hanna Nadeh and three mobile telephones and fled the scene," the sheet said.

The prosecution added that fingerprints lifted from both crime scenes matched those of Jaghameen.

In addition, the bullets extracted from the victim's bodies matched a machine gun found in Jaghameen's home, it said.

(Continued on page 2)



His Majesty King Abdullah meets Monday with Lord Gilbert, minister of military procurement at the British Ministry of Defence (Photo by Youssef 'Allan')

King, British minister hold talks on bilateral ties, defence issues

Britain to provide Jordan with Challenger tanks

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah met Monday at the Royal Court with Lord Gilbert, minister of military procurement at the British Ministry of Defence, for talks on bilateral relations and defence and military issues.

Lord Gilbert expressed Britain's determination to continue its support for Jordan and to meet the defence requirements of the Jordan Armed Forces in order to bolster its role in protecting the region's security and stability.

The British minister

announced at the meeting that an agreement has been reached to provide Jordan with a large number of Challenger I battle tanks as a gift from the armed forces of the United Kingdom.

King Abdullah expressed his appreciation for the gift and Britain's other forms of assistance to the Kingdom. He said the tanks will contribute further to the modernisation of the Jordan Armed Forces.

In remarks following the meeting, Lord Gilbert described Jordanian-British relations as historic and

deep-rooted. He said offering the Challenger I battle tanks to Jordan is a move that reflects the United Kingdom's desire to maintain and strengthen bilateral ties and also shows London's appreciation of the role played by King Abdullah and the new government.

Lord Gilbert noted that the British and Jordanian governments will hold negotiations in the coming few months on the number of tanks to be presented to Jordan and the date for delivery.

Israel releases three prisoners into Jordanian custody

AMMAN (J.T.) — Israel released three Jordanian prisoners and handed them over to the Jordanian authorities Monday at the King Hussein Bridge on the River Jordan.

The three, Wael Hazaleh, Maher Hassan Isa and Saleh Suleiman Azzawi, were serving jail sentences for criminal offences and were not on the list of 14 security prisoners whose release has been sought by the Jordanian government.

A source at the Foreign Ministry told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that arrangements for the release of the three and their handover to Jordanian authorities were supervised by Jordan's Ambassador to Israel Omar Rifai and embassy staff.

"The three were released unconditionally and Jordan made no commitment to Israel in connection with their fate," according to Information Minister Nasser Lawzi.

"The Jordanian authorities can open their own investigations with the three men, but no commitment on this was made to the Israelis in this respect," Lawzi told the Jordan Times.

The men's release came one day after Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh expressed concern over the prisoners question.

The prime minister told the Public Freedoms Committee in the Lower House of Parliament that Jordan would spare no effort to secure the release of prisoners in Israeli jails and

said he had instructed Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib to intensify contacts with the Israeli government to arrange a visit to the prisoners by their relatives during the 'Eid Al Adha later this month.

In addition to the 14 security prisoners, Israel still holds three Jordanians for what it alleges are criminal offences.

"The Jordanian government will pursue efforts for the release of all the prisoners from Israeli jails," Lawzi said.

Most Jordanian prisoners in Israel were freed more than a year ago in exchange for the release of two Mossad agents who in late 1997 attempted to assassinate Khaled Misha'al, a senior member of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas.

According to the Foreign Ministry source, Rifai is maintaining contacts with the concerned Israeli authorities to secure the release of the 14 political prisoners.

Petra said an agreement has been reached with Israel to allow a Jordanian medical team to visit the prisoners for medical examinations on March 31.

It said arrangements have been made to allow the relatives of the prisoners to visit them on March 25.

Last October, the prisoners were visited by their relatives who issued a statement afterwards saying the inmates suffer from serious health problems.

Cabinet meets to discuss water situation, possible shortage

Government maintains demand for full water share from Israel

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — The government Monday stood firm in demanding Jordan's full water rights from Israel, while drafting contingency measures to deal with any possible water crisis.

"Jordan and Israel have signed a peace treaty, which we insist on implementing as is, and we have officially informed [the Israeli side] of our stand," Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh told reporters after a Cabinet session at the Water Ministry.

Responding to Israel's proposal to cut 40 per cent of water supplies to the Kingdom stipulated in the 1994 peace treaty, Rawabdeh said: "We will not deal with such an issue by protesting or shouting [at each other] but through negotiations, which are still continuing in order to achieve full implementation."

After the meeting, which examined the Kingdom's general water situation and plans to deal with a possible shortage this summer, Rawabdeh said: "Jordan will not complain to the

U.N. [in case Israel insists on its stand], as there are certain methods to implement the agreement, and we will try to secure our right, which I'm sure we will get."

The prime minister did not elaborate.

According to the peace treaty, Israel extracts 12 million cubic metres (mcm) of water from the Yarmouk River in summer and Jordan uses the rest. In winter, Israel takes 33mcm from the river, of which 20mcm are stored for Jordan in Lake Tiberias for the Kingdom's use in summer.

Israeli Ambassador to Jordan Oded Eran said his country was not able this winter to collect the 20mcm from Yarmouk because of a regional drought. Therefore, he said, the situation should be dealt with on an annual basis depending on the circumstances.

"The two sides have to understand that when there is shortage, it should be shared between the two," Eran told the Jordan Times.

According to the treaty, Jordan and Israel should cooperate to supply the Kingdom with an additional quantity of 50mcm of drink-

able water every year.

According to Eran, the two countries have so far not found sources of water to supply this amount.

"In the absence of these sources, Israel as a gesture agreed to provide 25mcm a year from Tiberias until a solution to the 50mcm is found, and hopefully this will be achieved in two years," he added. "But in this particular year, we cannot meet that [commitment]. And we are not saying that we will give zero... we will make all efforts to implement the accord."

Jordan Valley Authority Secretary General Dureid Mahasneh, who headed the Jordanian team to the talks with the Israelis this week, dismissed Eran's statements.

"We gave them their share last year, and the treaty is clear in stipulating that Jordan will use Lake Tiberias to store water in winter and reclaim it in summer, regardless of all circumstances," Mahasneh said.

"The drought in Israel is different from Jordan, where a citizen gets two cubic metres a week. Each month we must pump 3.3mcm to

supply Amman and we now only have 2.5mcm to provide."

News agencies reported that Israel said poor rain had depleted water resources to their lowest point since 1980 and that Israel proposed reducing Jordan's supply for 1999.

They added that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called on Jordan yesterday to accept an "amicable solution" to the dispute.

"Israel has no intention of backing down from our agreements with Jordan or the Palestinians concerning water supplies, but there is a real shortage problem. For the longer term, the only real solution is to build desalination plants," Netanyahu was quoted as saying.

Jordan, which declared a drought earlier this year, maintains its water crisis is more severe than Israel's.

Rawabdeh, who said the Cabinet will meet regularly at the ministry to examine the water situation, reassured Jordanians that his government gives utmost priority to the situation, which, he said, might "get

closer to a crisis during the summer."

"Solutions to meet the problem will be difficult, and we will need the cooperation and efforts of every citizen," he said, without giving further details about the solutions.

"The final decision will be taken comprehensively in a coming meeting, and we will inform people," he said.

Asked if his government will address private well owners who violate a fixed quota for pumping, Rawabdeh said: "I hope not to address the violators in the press, but in accordance with law."

Water Minister Kamel Mahadin said Jordan's water deficit for the second half of this year was projected at approximately 10 per cent, with demand totalling 283mcm and supply amounting to 254mcm.

Dam levels this year are only at around 35 per cent of full capacity following low rainfall this winter.

Mahadin said a plan, which will include water rationing strategies, will be set up and include three levels, "medium, tough and severe." He did not explain.

Netanyahu promises to expand Jewish settlement

MAALE EFRAIM (R) — Defying the United States, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged on Monday to strengthen Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

Three days after U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross called Israeli settlement "very destructive to the pursuit of peace," Netanyahu toured the Jordan Valley, territory occupied in the 1967 Middle East war, and vowed Israel would stay there forever.

"What is happening here is big building, big development. We want

it to be bigger," Netanyahu said. "Without the Jordan Valley, without this protective wall, we cannot protect the state of Israel and therefore we will remain here forever," he added.

Campaigning for votes two months ahead of Israel's May 17 general election, Netanyahu mingled with residents, helped inaugurate a new stretch of highway, paused for a glance at the Jordan River and laid a cornerstone at a new college.

In a telephone interview with Reuters on Friday, Ross said: "We

see settlement activity as very destructive to the pursuit of peace precisely because it predestines and prejudices what ought to be negotiated."

Asked about Ross' comments, Netanyahu said settlements were "absolutely not" destructive to the peace process.

Ross' words appeared to be a hardening of U.S. policy on Israeli settlement, which Washington has described in the past as an obstacle to peace.

Around 160,000 Jewish settlers

live in roughly 150 settlements throughout the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians consider settlement growth a violation of Israeli-Palestinian peace deals.

Netanyahu promised to turn Maale Efraim, a hilltop settlement of 1,700, into an "anchor city" that would provide services for the Jordan Valley region.

"We will add more neighbourhoods. We want Maale Efraim to be large," Netanyahu said at a promenade overlooking the fertile valley along the border with Jordan.

Egyptian bedouin flee to Israel to escape hunger

KETZIO (AFP) — Some 600 Egyptian bedouin have entered Israel illegally from Sinai and asked for asylum, saying they were driven by hunger, Israeli police said Monday.

Egyptian officials, however, denied Israeli claims of a mass exodus of Sinai bedouin to Israel but admitted that "individual groups" had illegally crossed the border into the Jewish state.

Israeli police quoted some of the 600 bedouin, who crossed the border into Israel at this village in the northern Negev desert, as saying that hundreds more intended to do likewise.

The region has been suffering from a severe drought for several months.

"They arrived in whole families, with their camels and donkeys and infiltrated into Israeli territory on the night of Sunday to Monday," police spokesman Shalom Hemo said.

"The Israeli army has so far merely surrounded them and erected a provisional camp for them," he said.

A first group of about 20 adults and children entered Israel illegally on Saturday, saying they were victims of a feud.

Three adults and a teenager

were taken into custody. They asked to be allowed to stay in Israel under the family reunification scheme.

An army spokesman said the bedouin had been given humanitarian aid until the matter could be cleared up.

In Egypt, officials denied there had been a mass exodus.

The Israeli police reports that 600 Egyptian bedouin had entered Israel illegally "are baseless and are aimed at harming Egypt," said Khairi Hassan, the head of the town council in the border town of Rafah.

A police spokesman in Egypt's Sinai peninsula, who

declined to be named, said "only a few individual groups of bedouin illegally infiltrated" the Israeli border from Egypt.

Hassan admitted that the region was stricken by drought this winter and said that prunes, which are the main staple harvest of bedouin in the eastern Sinai desert, had been affected by the dry winter.

"This triggered the anger" of some tribesmen including the Azazmeh, who are among those who reportedly entered Israel illegally, he said.

The Egyptian ministry of agriculture has taken measures to save the rest of the harvest, Hassan said.



BIGGEST ARMS SHOW IN THE REGION: An Emirati helicopter lifts an American mini-jeep to be tested on the ground, at the military exhibition IDEX 99 in Abu Dhabi. Despite a cash crunch, the world's top arms manufacturers deployed in force at the IDEX which opened in the Gulf, a region which has seen two major conflicts in as many decades (AFP photo)

Israeli police want to question Netanyahu in Sharon probe

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli police want to question Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in an investigation into whether Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon bribed a witness in a court case, officials said Monday.

It would be the second time Netanyahu is interrogated by police in a criminal investigation since he came to office in mid-1996.

Police obtained permission from the state attorney's office to question Netanyahu as part of their investigation into allegations that Sharon tampered with a witness in a 1997 libel suit he filed against the Haaretz newspaper, a police spokesman said.

No final decision has yet been taken on when Netanyahu will be interrogated, the spokesman said.

The investigation centres on allegations that Sharon granted favours to a general-turned-businessman, Avigdor Ben-Gal, to change his testimony in a libel case filed by the minister against the Israeli newspaper Haaretz.

Haaretz had reported that Sharon, as defence minister in

1982, led Israel into a full-scale war in Lebanon while telling then Prime Minister Menachem Begin it would be only a limited incursion to halt attacks by Palestinian guerrillas. Ben-Gal, who headed the army's northern command during the invasion, was called to testify for Haaretz in the 1997 trial after he said publicly that Sharon had secretly plotted a much deeper thrust into Lebanon than approved by Begin. But Ben-Gal retracted that statement during the trial, which Sharon lost.

The current investigation centres on charges that Sharon bought Ben-Gal's change of testimony by inviting him two weeks before the trial on a trip to Russia that offered lucrative business opportunities to the former general.

In his court testimony, Ben-Gal had claimed that he never discussed the case with Sharon and had not even seen the minister in more than a year.

Both Ben-Gal and Sharon have been questioned by police over the past two months about the case.

In a bid to support Sharon, Netanyahu's office said last month that it was the prime minister who suggested that Ben-Gal participate in the Russia trip. This apparently contradicted other versions obtained by police and is the reason for investigators wanting to question Netanyahu.

Netanyahu was already questioned by police in 1997 over alleged fraud and breach of trust surrounding the short-lived nomination of a political crony, Roni Bar-On, as attorney general.

Police recommended that Netanyahu be indicted at the time, but this was rejected by the attorney general.

Sharon has long claimed to be the victim of a vindictive campaign by the media over his role in Israel's costly 1982 invasion of Lebanon. He was forced to resign as defence minister in 1983 after a state inquiry found he was "indirectly responsible" for the massacre of hundreds of Palestinians in the Lebanese refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila by Israeli-allied Christian militia.

U.S. warplanes strike Iraq

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. warplanes launched attacks in the no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq Monday, striking a radar site, a radio relay station and anti-aircraft artillery, the U.S. military said.

The attacks were carried out after an Iraqi radar "posed a threat" to coalition aircraft in the north, and after an Iraqi MiG-25 crossed into the southern no-fly zone, the military said.

U.S. Air Force F-16 CG Fighting Falcons, U.S. Navy F/A-18 Hornets and F-14 Tomcats carried out the attacks in the south at around 0645 GMT, the U.S. Central Command said in a statement.

They struck a radio relay site 320 kilometres northeast of Baghdad near As Salaman, and a radar site 464 kilometres southeast of Baghdad in the vicinity of Al Shuaybah, the Tampa, Florida-based command said. "The strikes were in response to Iraqi aircraft violations of the southern no-fly zone," the statement said. "These hostile acts were the latest of more than 135 Iraqi provocations in the southern no-fly zone since (Operation) Desert Fox," it said.

A spokesman for the command said there was a single violation of the southern no-fly zone, by the Iraqi MiG-25.

In the north, U.S. fighters operating from Incirlik air base in Turkey struck at around 0915 GMT northwest of Mosul.

Aircraft patrolling the zone "detected Iraqi radar posing a threat to coalition aircraft," a statement by the U.S. European Command said.

Fighting on central front in Horn of Africa border war

ADDIS ABABA (AFP) — Ethiopian and Eritrean troops battled Monday over the central front in their border conflict, officials here and in Asmara said, after a lull and a war of words over a peace plan.

"The fighting is still continuing," Eritrean presidential chief of staff Yemane Ghebremeskel told AFP in Nairobi by telephone from Asmara at 4:30 p.m. (1330 GMT).

"It started at 8:30 this morning, but we still don't know the outcome," Ghebremeskel said. In Addis Ababa, Ethiopian government spokesman Salome Tadesse earlier said the battle was "fierce".

The Eritrean foreign ministry earlier said Eritrean forces had shot down an Ethiopian MiG-23 fighter plane and destroyed 19 tanks — a claim Tadesse dismissed as "a complete lie".

Asmara said Ethiopia launched a large-scale offensive on the central front on Sunday, preceded by aerial and artillery bombardments on Saturday afternoon, after a week-long lull.

Ethiopian authorities at first downplayed the military exchanges as "skirmishes" but later acknowledged that the clashes had developed into fighting.

"Fierce fighting at the Zala Ambessa-Egala front continues today," Tadesse told AFP Monday morning.

The Eritrean ministry said the Ethiopians suffered heavy troop losses in the fighting on the central front near Tsorona, in a statement dated Sunday

and received by AFP in Nairobi on Monday.

The two localities are close, but separated by steep hills.

The Eritrean statement said Ethiopia pressed home its offensive Sunday with heavy artillery, tanks and warplanes, and with the help of mercenary pilots.

For more than a week, the various fronts had been quiet, after both sides had agreed to a peace plan designed by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

Asmara and Addis Ababa had instead launched a war of words on the interpretation of the peace plan.

Ethiopia is demanding that Eritrea withdraw "unilaterally and unconditionally from remaining Ethiopian territory" before the plan goes into effect. Eritrea on Saturday dismissed that demand as "ludicrous".

"It is nowhere to be found in the Organisation of African Unity Framework Agreement and they cannot add elements to the plan at this stage," the official ERINA news agency said. Ethiopia claims that such a retreat is in "the letter and the spirit of the OAU peace plan".

The two sides first went to war last May when Eritrean troops rolled into Badme, on the western front, Zala Ambessa, on the central front, and several other border zones.

The fighting died down after five weeks as diplomatic efforts took over, but resumed on February 6 after they proved fruitless.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Islamists massacre 6 ahead of polls

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algerian Islamists massacred six people and injured 10 others in an overnight attack near the garrison town of Blida south of Algiers, security forces announced on Monday. The "terrorist gang" attacked Sidi Al Kabir some 50 kilometres from the capital and carried out a "cowardly assassination" of six people on Sunday night, the security forces said.

Tehran mayor gets approval for paper

TEHRAN (AFP) — The convicted former mayor of Tehran was given the green light Monday by Iran's culture ministry to launch a new newspaper, the official news agency IRNA said. Gholamhossein Karbaschi was given approval to launch the Ham-Mihan (Compatriot) paper despite ongoing efforts by opponents in the conservative-dominated parliament to take away his control over the official paper of the Tehran municipality, Hamshari (Citizen).

Iranian warns France over Rushdie

TEHRAN (AFP) — A leading Iranian conservative on Monday warned France about supporting author Salman Rushdie ahead of a visit by President Mohammad Khatami next month. "We must announce to the political and intellectual leaders of France that insulting the sanctity of over one billion Muslims does not mean supporting freedom of expression and thought," said Habibollah Asgari, secretary general of the hardline Islamic Coalition Society (ICS).

Iraq and Iran to exchange POWs

BAGHDAD (R) — More than 400 Iraqi and 57 Iranian prisoners captured during the 1980-88 Iraq-Iran war will be released and repatriated on Tuesday, a source at the Iranian embassy in Baghdad said on Monday. The source said 420 Iraqi prisoners of war (POWs) would be freed by Tehran and would cross the border point northeast of Baghdad linking Iraq's Al Muthanna to Khosravi in Iran.

Explosion near EC office in Ankara injures one

ANKARA (AFP) — A woman passerby was injured and two vehicles damaged Monday in an explosion outside the European Commission's office in Ankara, an EU spokesman said. Meanwhile police in Istanbul arrested a student suspected of involvement in a shopping mall blast there Saturday which left 12 dead, the local Anatolia news agency reported. The Turkish media revised down the death toll in that blast which had earlier been put at 13.

Court sentences two to death

(Continued from page 1)

Officials in May tied the two murders together and said that Ochi was the intended victim in the Rabia murder because of a financial dispute, while in the Shmeisani murder, Sa'ad was targeted "because of personal differences" between the assailants and the psychiatrist.

The two-hour court session, which was attended by the press and family members of the victims, was held under extraordinary security measures, with heavily armed security officers, many wearing bullet-proof vests, positioned in

different parts of the courtroom.

The defendants were brought in separately to the courtroom handcuffed and shackled.

The extra precaution was taken in light of a failed attempt on Feb. 17 by Jaghameen and another defendant, Abdullah Suleiman, to hijack the police van that was transporting them from the State Security Court in Marka back to Swaga Prison where they were held during the trial.

Two policemen and Suleiman died during a three-hour stand-off with security forces on the desert highway.

Investigations indicated that the two prisoners came into possession of a gun which they used to kill their guards. A week later, Sanaa Jaghameen, 31, sister of Mohammad Jaghameen, confessed to smuggling the gun into the State Security Court building by hiding it under her clothes.

Officers Mohammad Daifallah and Mahmoud Farahed were killed and three other officers were injured in the incident. Monday's verdicts will automatically be reviewed by the Court of Cassation within 30 days.

JORDAN TELEVISION

PROGRAMME TWO
Tel. 4773111-19
19:10 News headlines
19:35 Doc. — Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00 Islamic History in Jordan
21:30 On the Banks of Jordan
22:00 News in English
22:10 Doc. — National Geographic
23:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

PRAYER TIMES

04:24 Fajr
05:41 Sunrise
11:44 Dhur
15:09 Asr
17:47 Maghreb
19:04 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swedish, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624833/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751.
Amman International Church

Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Swedish Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331
The American Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Temperatures are expected to rise slightly, skies partly cloudy, occasionally rainy in the northern parts

of the Kingdom, and winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman 07/17
Aqaba 12/24
Deserts 05/19
Jordan Valley 11/25

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 15, Aqaba 22. Humidity readings: Amman 43 per cent, Aqaba 44 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 06/14
Jerash 08/16
Uza Qays 09/16
Madaba 07/15
Petra 08/16
Dead Sea 13/25

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Rami Mazzawi 4894788
Dr. Fakhri Tayeh 4915880
Dr. Bassam Karadshah 4389200
Dr. Khalid Abdo 4657129

of the Kingdom, and winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate, and seas calm.

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004
Ruka Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

AMMAN:
Dr. Lutfi Shibli (02)241789
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)27360
ZARQA:
Dr. Samir Lawzi (05)989601
Palestine Pharmacy (05)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic Police 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs

Abdali Tel. Repairs 4623101
Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic Abdli 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4644281/6
Aklidh Maternity 4643441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Army, Marka 4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607155
Al Anfal Cancer Centre 5353000
ZARQA:
Zarga Govt. Hospital (09)83323

Zarga National Hospital (09)800560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02)7101372, (02)7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital (02)7102831, (02)7103011
Specialty Hospital (02)7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)2040111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. 44153200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:25 Aqaba (add) (RJ)

07:30 Damascus (RJ)
09:50 Tehran, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 Muscat, Dubai (LY)
10:15 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
16:20 Cairo (RJ)
17:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
17:30 London, Frankfurt (RJ)
18:15 Chicago, Shannon (RJ)
23:10 Beirut (RJ)
23:59 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
00:45 Madrid (add) (RJ)
02:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
06:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
14:35 Istanbul (TK)
18:00 Dubai, Damascus (EK)
18:40 Beirut (ME)
19:05 Paris (AF)
20:05 Tel Aviv (LY)
20:40 Cairo (MS)
22:50 London, Damascus (BA)
23:35 Amsterdam (KL)
23:55 Larnaca (CY)
00:55 Bucharest (RO)
02:00 Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
07:25 Aqaba (arriving at QALIA) (RW)
08:50, Aqaba (arriving at QALIA) (RW)
18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QALIA) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

05:00 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
08:25 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:05 Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:15 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
11:45 Berlin, Brussels (RJ)
12:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
12:10 Paris (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
12:30 Cairo (RJ)
19:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
19:35 Beirut (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (RJ)
21:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
00:45 Damascus (RJ)
01:30 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights
07:10 Frankfurt (LH)
15:35 Istanbul (TK)
19:00 Dubai (EK)
20:00 Beirut (ME)
20:50 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40 Cairo (MS)
00:35 Amsterdam (KL)
01:55 Bucharest (RO)
03:00 Rome (AZ)
07:25 London, Damascus (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
05:00 Aqaba (from QALIA) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QALIA) (RW)



PRINCE ALI VISITS AMMAN MUNICIPALITY: His Royal Highness Prince Ali Ben Al Hussein Monday called at the Amman Municipality where he was received by Mayor Nidal Al Hadid. Hadid briefed him on the municipality's services to citizens, and its future projects and plans. Prince Ali thanked the municipality for the services it provides to pilgrims passing through Jordan (Petra photo)

News in Brief

Queen Noor offers condolences in Saudi Arabia

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Monday arrived in Saudi Arabia to offer condolences to the royal Saudi family over the passing of Princess Anoud, wife of King Fahd Ben Abdul Aziz. Queen Noor will meet with King Fahd's daughter, and sisters of the late Princess Anoud, several Saudi Princesses and royal family members. Queen Noor was accompanied by Their Royal Highnesses princess Rania Abdullah, Princess Taghrid Mohammad, Princess Alia Al Faisal, Princesses Aisha, Zein and Iman.

Fateh member visits King Hussein's grave

AMMAN (Petra) — Member of the Central Committee of Fateh Movement Abbas Zaki, accompanied by Palestinian Ambassador to Jordan Omar Khaib visited His Majesty the late King Hussein's grave and laid a wreath of flowers.

PM refutes appeal for pardons

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdur-Rau'f S. Rawabdeh Monday dismissed news reports that he presented an appeal to His Majesty King Abdullah to issue a general pardon for criminals. Rawabdeh said such a pardon can only be issued by virtue of a law, endorsed by Parliament. Rawabdeh said he had received several pleas and petitions for pardons, which he said passed to King Abdullah, but had not made an appeal for pardons.

Three children killed in tractor accident

AMMAN (Petra) — Three children were killed and several others were injured when the tractor they were tampering with overturned in Thneiba village and rolled into a valley. Three brothers, identified as Tareq (7), Narjis (5) and Laith Afifi (4) were killed in the accident. Several others, who were sitting in the trailer towed by the tractor suffered fractures and bruises when they jumped out of the trailer.

What's Going On

FILMS

• German film "Das Leben ist eine Baustelle" (with subtitles in English) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman on Wednesday March 17 at 6:00 p.m.

• "The X Files — The Movie" at Books@Café, Jabal Amman at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457/8).



Children remember King Hussein in two-kilometre march

By Runa Awwad

AMMAN — Around 3,000 young public and private school students marched silently in a sombre ceremony in memory of His Majesty King Hussein, marking the end of the official 40-day mourning period Sunday.

The two-kilometre march kicked off and ended at the Haya Cultural Centre in Shmeisani.

Many students, some from the Um Al Hussein Orphanage and the Dar Al Bir Orphanage founded by the late King, expressed grief over the loss of the "father and leader".

Carrying black flags, pictures of King Hussein and banners, the students, accompanied by their teachers, paid tribute to the King.

Members of the International Family Group also

attended to share the sadness of Jordanian children after the death of the "champion of peace".

"We love him because he was very caring," said an eight-year-old child who was walking with her father in the march. "He was a very heavy man who was never too busy to look after his people and people around the world. He had a rare quality that is hard to find these days."

The ceremony was opened with a minute of silence, followed by speeches from Minister of Sports and Youth Mohammad Kheir Mamsar, the head of the centre and other children who recalled the King's achievements in supporting the children's movement in Jordan.

The speakers said they take solace in His Majesty King Abdullah "in whom they find

a promising figure who will follow in the footsteps of his father in supporting children."

Children also placed simple paintings reflecting their love to King Hussein on the walls of the modest centre. Some paintings read: "We love you," "You are our father," "We are very sad," and "We know you are in Heaven."

An orphan from Dar Al Bir said he cried when King Hussein died and refused to eat because "the late Monarch was the one who looked after us and is the reason why we lead a good life now."

He was referring to the King's gesture in 1997 when he turned his guest palace into the Dar Al Bir orphanage to look after 227 children from infants to 14-year olds.

Today, a staff of 175 people supervise the children.

JPA reaffirms decision to ban normalisation

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Press Association (JPA) has reaffirmed its earlier decision banning its members from "normalising" relations with Israel until all Israeli-held Arab territories have been returned to their legitimate owners and a just and comprehensive peace has been achieved. Echoing a call by the Federation of Arab Journalists (FAJ) on all Arab journalists to refrain from normalising relations with Israel, JPA President Seif Sharif said the association would impose the heaviest penalty on any member who violates the association's rules.

In its statement, a copy of which was sent to the Jordan Times by the JPA president, the FAJ said the federation's general secretariat took the following decision on Feb. 10 at a meeting in Cairo: "The federation's general secretariat reaffirms its earlier decision of rejecting all forms of normalisation with the Israeli enemy and condemns the behaviour of a number of Arab journalists who followed a normalisation course under political, professional and cultural justifications and excuses. The FAJ demands that all press associations impose the heaviest penalties on any journalist that violate this decision."

The federation's memorandum said: "The federation rejects all Israeli attempts to exploit the text of agreements like those paragraphs which call for halting all incitements (against Israel) as an excuse for restricting freedom of press and expression in Arab countries and rejects using those paragraphs as a tool to exercise political pressure and blackmail (on the Arab states)."

Federation Secretary General Salahuddin Hafez, who signed the memorandum, requested the JPA implement the rules firmly and in full commitment to the federation's rules.

He requested that journalists remain committed to these rules. Sharif said he urged all journalists to abide by the federation's regulations, warning that violators will face "the heaviest penalties."

The Jordan Times
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Jordan, U.S. conclude economic agreements

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan's Ambassador to Washington on Monday signed two economic agreements with the U.S., one designating an additional Qualifying Industrial Zone in the Kingdom, and the other a trade and investment framework agreement (TIFA).

At the signing ceremony for the QIZ, Ambassador Marwan Muasher addressed U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky, Israeli diplomats and other officials, saying that "the agreement by the U.S. Trade Representative's Office to designate the Jordan Gateway Project as a qualified industrial zone is yet another step towards fulfilling part of the potential of the QIZ initiative."

Muasher added that the potential benefits to both Jordan and Israel "are indeed enormous and must be realised if we are to

sustain peace and security in our region."

He said U.S. efforts to encourage joint cooperation and promote exports from the QIZ were much appreciated and that Jordan has agreed with Israel to apply for the approval of additional QIZ areas in the Kingdom.

Following the signing of the trade and investment framework agreement, Muasher said the signature was "testimony to the high level of cooperation and understanding which characterises our bilateral relations."

"The strong U.S. support for Jordan expressed so eloquently and movingly by President Clinton at the time of the passing away of His Majesty the late King Hussein and later reinforced by concrete pledges of direct assistance, has had an enormous impact in maintaining our economic stability," Muasher told the audience.

The Clinton administration last month promised to seek \$300 million in additional aid to Jordan through the Congress.

"The vote of confidence in our economic efforts and the constant work to help the Jordanian economy sustain itself in the midst of adverse regional circumstances have gone a long way in helping us meet the existing challenges, the ambassador said."

He said the TIFA agreement was yet further proof of the United States' confidence in the prosperous future of the Jordanian economy.

"As we agree on a road map and a framework for joint work that will lead eventually to a free trade area agreement between our two countries and to an increase of U.S. private investments in Jordan, we

are both eager to execute the requirements as quickly and as efficiently as possible," Muasher said.

At the end of both ceremonies, Muasher acknowledged the efforts of all those involved in bringing about the finalisation of the two agreements. He thanked in particular Secretary of Commerce William Daley, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and Ambassador Barshefsky.

He concluded his address saying that Jordan "looks forward to establishing a new framework of relations between Jordan, the Palestinian areas and Israel so that the potential for economic cooperation and development can start to be fulfilled. We also believe in the full implementation of agreements signed, as we have always done."

Pre-marital tests are only solution to curbing Kufor-Rakeb disease

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — A rare and hereditary neurological disease, which renders its victims bed-bound, has hit a northern Jordanian town where marriages among relatives has been customary for decades.

Doctors said proper enforcement of medical pre-marital tests are the only means to curb the disease, known as Kufor-Rakeb after the village where it originated.

Abdul Latif Wreikat, head of the neurological department at the army-run Royal Medical Services who has been researching the disorder for years, said the disease, which hits patients in their teens, renders them totally dependent on their families' as it affects their motor activities to the point of non-productive existence.

"All affected people are normal at birth," Wreikat told the Jordan Times. "The onset of symptoms become apparent between the age of 14 and 15 and by 20, they become completely paralysed," he said.

A 1992 field study, which surveyed 99 members of a consanguineous Jordanian family (48 men and 51 women), found that five siblings were report-

edly affected by the disorder.

The study, conducted Wreikat and a team of four Jordanian doctors, pointed out that patients usually stop attending school within a period of six to twelve months from the day the disease hits them.

"Their walking becomes slow, they become less inclined to participate in sports and it would take them longer to dress and bathe," according to the study.

Constant drooling becomes a major problem as the disease progresses.

All affected with the disease have expressionless faces with varying degrees of widening of the palpebral fissures, giving a staring look, according to the study. Blinking was infrequent and patients had a monotonous and almost whispering speech.

Wreikat said that annual treatment of such patients, estimated at JD20,000 per individual, places huge financial constraints on the Ministry of Health's limited budget.

"The disease could be curbed if the Health Ministry launches mandatory premarital tests," he said.

Five years ago, the Health Ministry invited those seeking to tie the knot to undergo pre-mari-

tal tests to check for possible genetically transferable diseases, but it left it up to citizens to pursue their marriage plans if any defect was found.

However, many doctors believe the decision has remained ink on paper in a country where inter-marriage is common and such tests remain unacceptable to a majority of the religiously conservative population.

In addition to Kufor-Rakeb disease, Jordanian and Cypriot scientists identified a new hereditary neurological disorder which they named Jerash motor neurotherapy after the region of Jordan where most sufferers come from.

"The disorder, which can cause blindness, paralysis or death, stems from a genetic error bared by chromosome nine," Wreikat was quoted by AFP as saying recently.

"The discovery is important for future prevention of the disease, as we now know it is hereditary and linked to intermarriage," he added.

A 1992 population based study of consanguineous marriages in Jordan, which surveyed 2,000 households, found that 32.03 per cent of marriages were among first cousins, 6.8 per cent

among second cousins, 10.5 per cent among distant cousins and 50 per cent among couples who had no familial ties.

Doctors have warned for decades that such close marriages tend to produce an increase in various types of genetic disorders such as birth defects, mental retardation, deafness and blindness.

"A high percentage of hereditary neurological disorders are more prevalent in small communities in the north and south of the country, especially that members in closed societies tend to marry their relatives," Wreikat said.

He added that ignorance and lack of awareness further aggravated the situation.

"Even if these families have children with disorders, they continue having more children thinking that the others might be free of the disorder," he told the Jordan Times.

"In other instances, many mothers with large families who visit me to inquire about their children who have (mental, physical or neurological) disorders, respond to my analysis by asking, 'is his or her situation going to resemble that of this brother or that sister.'"

Wadi Rum to be stage for sports adventure series

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — Dungeons, dragons and hidden treasures sound like relics of the dark ages, but will soon be featured in the landscape of Wadi Rum.

The filming of "Desert Forges," a sports adventure game series with a cost of \$5-6 million, will begin next May in Wadi Rum, said Jean Luis Jodfroi, director of production of the project.

His Majesty King Abdullah laid the cornerstone of the project, which is expected to make a dramatic boost to tourism in the Kingdom due to the high publicity of the show, last November.

The game show will be a test of physical endurance and intellectual wit.

In the same manner of Fort Boyard, this game show involves a physical challenges and requires intellectual aptitude as well as a solid dose of common sense," said Jodfroi.

Fort Boyard is a sports adventure series with 500 episodes. It has been aired on JTV Channel 2 and broadcast in 53 other countries. The French company that produces the show, Expand, has also produced "Treasure Hunt" and "La Carte aux Tresors."

There are two stages to the



His Majesty King Abdullah laying the cornerstone of one of the desert castles along the Desert Forges trail last November (file photo)

games, and contestants are given 52 minutes to complete the two.

In the first stage, participants in the game have to cross a treacherous track in Wadi Rum along which they undergo a series of skills test.

During the second stage, the remaining two candidates will pair up to continue their adventure inside a "minefield" to win the sacred trophy.

At the end of the track is a castle, and upon entering,

they are given a certain time to find a hidden treasure.

The winner's prize will be an estimated JD6,000.

According to the game's rules, there will be four contestants, two men and two women, aged from 20-30 year old.

According to Jodfroi, five countries (France, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Canada) will take part in filming the games, which will be broadcast to 100 million people worldwide. All countries will broadcast in their native

language.

Jordanian staff will be trained to stage their own games after the French company hands the project to the Jordanian government in 10 years' time, said Jodfroi.

"One hundred and fifty Jordanians will be working on the set at the beginning of shooting," said Milkawi.

The project is expected to encourage tourism because of its worldwide coverage. The Ministry of Tourism has supported the project since its inception last November.

Santer warned in EU fraud row

BRUSSELS (AFP) — European Commission President Jacques Santer was warned Monday his head is on the block if he fails to take decisive action over allegations of corruption in Brussels' corridors of power.

The warning, from the most powerful politician in the European Parliament, came just hours before the publication of a report that could trigger the downfall of one or more members of the powerful European Union executive.

The report, drawn up by a panel of independent experts appointed by the parliament, assesses whether any of the 20 commissioners can be held responsible for cases of fraud, nepotism or financial mismanagement in their departments.

Pauline Green, leader of the parliament's biggest group, the Socialists, said the assembly expected swift action if any commissioner's conduct was called into question.

"If the report shows wrong-doing by any individual then, whoever they are, they must be rooted out," Green warned. "If Santer dithers or delays it will be his head that is on the block."

"If he does not act then we will."

British Conservative MEPs said that even if the report cleared individual commissioners they would seek to have the entire executive dismissed.

"Now is the time to stop the cover-up," said Edward McMillan-Scott.

Edith Cresson, the controversial former French prime minister, is seen as the most likely casualty of what is expected to be a damning report on the commission's financial management, its handling of the allocation of lucrative jobs and contracts and its reaction to allegations of fraud in its ranks.

The report was due to be handed to Santer at 1600 GMT and made public two hours later. Commissioners who are mentioned, including Cresson, were briefed on the contents relating to them Sunday.

Santer has convened an emergency meeting of the commission immediately after the publication of the report.

Cresson, previously best known for her claim that one in four Englishmen is homosexual and comments comparing the Japanese to "ants", has been attacked over the appointment of her

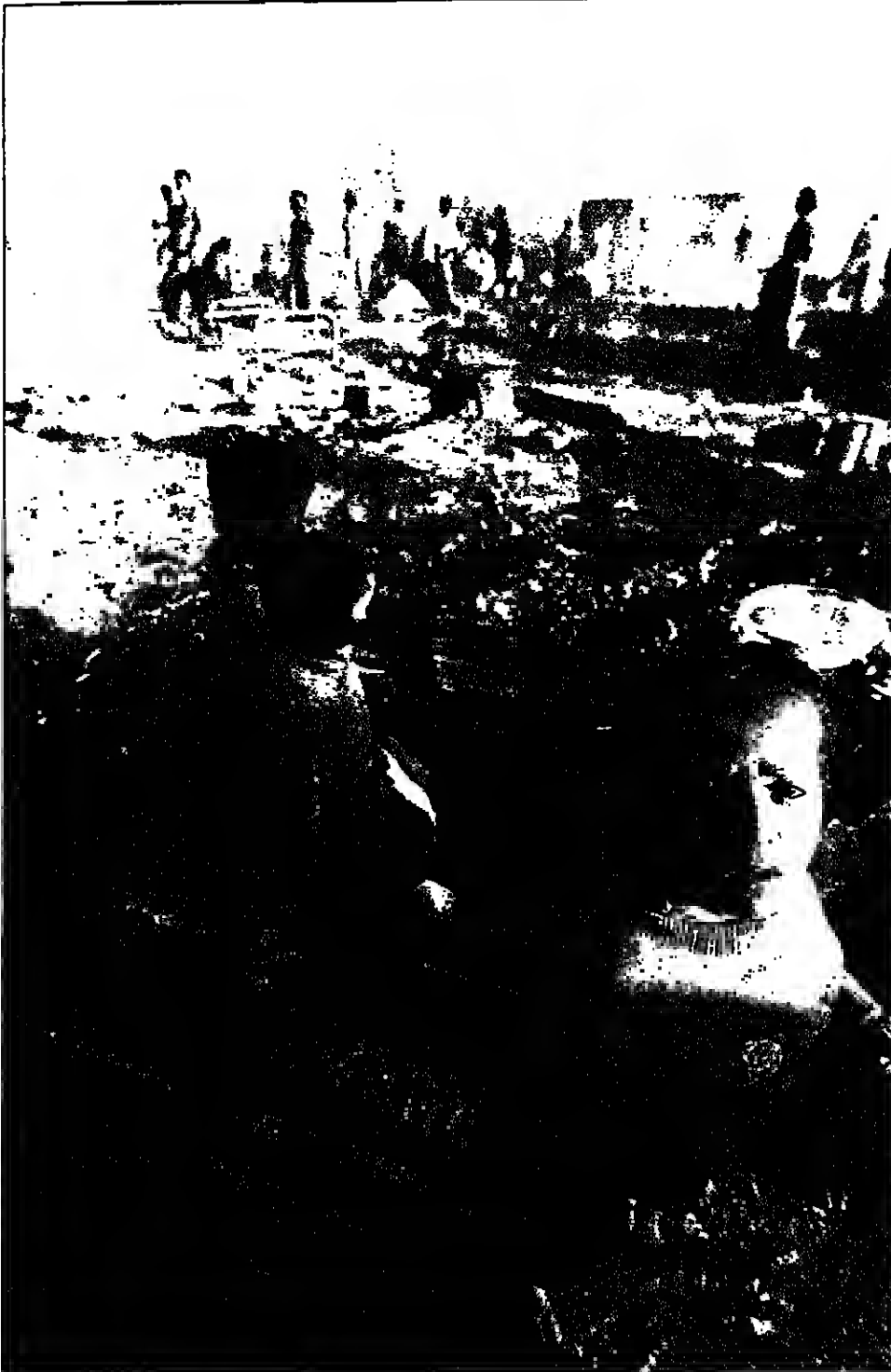
dentist and close friend Rene Berthelot as an advisor on AIDS.

She is also under fire over allegations of corruption in an EU training programme known as Leonardo for which she is responsible as research commissioner.

Similar abuses in the departments he has headed have put pressure on Manuel Marin. The Spanish commissioner is currently responsible for relations with Latin American, Mediterranean and South East Asian states and was formerly in charge of EU humanitarian aid.

Santer made it clear last week that he would disown any commissioner whose conduct was judged unacceptable by the report, backing down from his previous stance that the commission should act on the basis of collective responsibility.

The shift has been widely seen as clearing the way for an ouster of Cresson. But she has repeatedly insisted that she has no intention of stepping down and appears ready to provoke an institutional crisis that could embroil EU leaders just as they are trying to wrap up difficult negotiations on the bloc's future financing.



A young boy cries as he stands amid the smouldering remains of his dwelling in New Delhi after a fire swept through a sprawling shantytown near the Yamuna River. At least 22 people died in the blaze which left thousands of slum dwellers homeless (AFP photo)

Fire leaves trail of human tragedy in Indian slum

NEW DELHI (R) — Ghayasuddin says God saved him from the clutches of death Sunday as fire ravaged the New Delhi shanty town where he lives.

"As soon as the fire started spreading, my family members and I ran towards... a nearby mosque, the 45-year-old plastic scrap dealer said feebly from his hospital bed.

No one has told him yet that his wife and child perished. Indeed, Ghayasuddin, who suffered severe burns, was one of the very few survivors from those who sought refuge in the mosque.

His friend, Amar Nath, said Ghayasuddin's wife and child were among those who burnt to death in the blaze that killed at least 28 people and razed more than 1,000 ramshackle huts in a slum near the Yamuna River on the eastern side of the Indian capital.

Witnesses said the fire raged for a long time because the slum's narrow lanes made

it difficult for fire engines to reach the site, at least 500 metres from the nearest main road.

Witnesses said residents of the settlement, home to thousands of rag-pickers and junk traders, ran in panic along the narrow lanes as the fire spread. Many were trampled to death.

For Meenu Akhtar, 32, death was on all sides.

"I was serving food to my two children when I heard people shouting," she said, fighting back tears. "I came out and saw the fire blazing and spread towards us."

"I ran with my two-and-half-month-old son while my husband caught hold of our two elder children and started running towards the river. We had only two options — get burnt to death or risk drowning in the river."

"We jumped into the river along with our children, and a local ferry boat saved us," said Akhtar, whose youngest

child suffered severe burns on his head.

Sixty-year-old Mohammad Idris, lying in hospital with his legs covered up, said he was sleeping in his hut but could not get up and run because he suffers from paralysis.

"I knew that there was a big fire but could not do anything. Help came only later," he said.

As the sun came up Monday, residents searched frantically among the debris — burnt plastic material, cloth and furniture — to recover what they could of their belongings.

But most were disappointed. Many had lost their livelihoods.

"My only source of income was from this tea stall," said Salim Khan, 31, pointing towards the wreckage of a tin hut.

"Now I don't know how to feed my family."

Taiwan cautiously awaits China negotiator's visit

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan said Monday it hoped a rare visit this week by a key negotiator from Communist China would clinch plans for an unprecedented visit by Beijing's top Taiwan envoy.

But Lin Chong-Pin, vice chairman of the cabinet's Mainland Affairs Council, said Taipei had learnt from previous dealings with Beijing not to be "naively optimistic" about future plans.

Speaking two days before mainland negotiator Li Yafei's planned visit to the island, Lin reiterated Taipei's desire to see a historic visit by Beijing's top Taiwan-affairs negotiator, Wang Daohan, as soon as possible.

"We would like to see when Li comes that he will bring a concrete schedule and proposed activities for Wang's visit," Lin, whose council formulates policies towards the rival mainland, told Taipei's foreign correspondents' club.

Taipei hopes that Li, deputy secretary-general of Beijing's association for relations across the Taiwan Strait, can agree during his March 17-19 visit on a working plan — including a

date — for a Taiwan tour by Wang.

Beijing recently cast doubt on Wang's visit, saying further high-level talks with nationalist-ruled Taiwan were not possible unless Taipei agrees to discuss ending its half-century of estrangement from the Communist mainland.

Beijing has regarded the island as a renegade province that must be brought under its rule since Communist forces drove the nationalists' Republic of China off the mainland in 1949.

Mindful of Beijing's attitude, Lin said Taipei was open to talks but firm in its belief that union was possible only after China adopts a multiparty democracy acceptable to all Chinese.

"Our basic policy is not to wait until mainland democratises before we talk, or before we have dialogue on political issues... we welcome dialogue on any topics any time," Lin said.

"However, for reunification to happen, democracy is a precondition for us."

"It is no doubt and it should be very clear that we really wel-

come Mr. Wang's visit. We'd like to see that happen as soon as possible," Lin said. "But we are not naively optimistic."

Lin said he personally believed Wang would visit Taiwan this year because Beijing would like to engage Taiwan before the island's presidential election in March 2000.

Wang's visit would reciprocate an equally unprecedented visit to Beijing last October by Taiwan senior statesman Koo Chen-Fu, who met in the mainland capital with president and Communist Party chief Jiang Zemin and other leaders.

Wang agreed at that time to visit Taiwan at an unspecified "appropriate time" and Taipei has said repeatedly it hoped Beijing would visit in the spring.

On March 10, Shi Hwei-Yow, secretary-general of Taipei's semi-official Straits Exchange Foundation, accused Beijing of dragging its feet over Wang's visit.

"We had agreement about the timing. Coming early or late does not go in line with international decorum," Shi said, noting he did expect Li would bring concrete proposals.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kenyan leader pleads for African peace during visit by Obasanjo

NAIROBI (AFP) — Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi made a passionate appeal to African leaders to give peace and security a chance, while receiving Nigerian President-elect Olusegun Obasanjo, state-owned radio reported Monday. Addressing a state banquet in honour of retired General Obasanjo, who is due to take the reins of power in May and arrived here Sunday night, Moi lamented that "conflicts have now become more intractable, because they have become cases of regionalisation." Moi pointed out that the current state of affairs in Africa was not in line with the objectives of the founding fathers of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), who had envisaged a prosperous continent. African conflicts were hampering the achievement of the OAU's goals of a continent free of colonialism, racism, poverty, ignorance and disease, he said. Moi congratulated Obasanjo on his recent election victory, saying that the election gave Nigeria a renewed sense of renaissance. In reply, Obasanjo expressed gratitude to Moi and the people of Kenya for standing behind Nigeria during its dark days, a reference to more than 15 years of unelected rule by military regimes.

Italian president expected to step down early

ROME (AP) — Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro could step down as early as April 20 to allow lawmakers time to elect a new president before the European elections, news reports said Monday. Scalfaro has already said he'd be willing to leave office early to keep the two elections from overlapping, but has not set a date. His mandate ends May 28. The European elections are June 13, but it usually takes weeks for parliament to elect a new president because of Italy's complex voting system. News reports Monday said Scalfaro planned to step down April 20, two days after a referendum to abolish Italy's proportional electoral system. Scalfaro's willingness to resign has escalated the heated debate over a successor. Among the potential candidates are Treasury Minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, Senate President Nicola Mancino and EU Commissioner Emma Bonino. Bonino, the only one who is openly campaigning, would be Italy's first female president.

French teachers take to streets nationwide for reforms

PARIS (AFP) — French teachers were to take to the street Monday in a nationwide series of demonstrations to press for school reforms and to denounce rising violence in the classroom. The teachers, many of whom want the resignation of Education Minister Claude Allègre, were to march in the French capital and other cities. Similar protests are planned for Tuesday and Saturday. "We want real negotiations to be opened for reforms in the school system, qualitative reforms coupled with added funds, postings and equipment," union leader Monique Vuillat said. She accused the state of failing to realistically tackle the issue of reform in primary and secondary schools and cutting down on the number of teachers nationwide. Allègre has come under fire following a reform plan he recently submitted. The plan calls for extending the number of teacher work hours to enable them to assist an increasing number of students who encounter difficulties in their studies.

Air France launches campaign against child prostitution

PARIS (AP) — Air France Monday launched a campaign to combat child prostitution, using videos on long distance flights to remind travelers that sex with children is a crime — no matter where it takes place. With slogans including "Child prostitution is not a holiday souvenir" and "A child is not a local curiosity," the Air France videos are targeting the growing number of "Occasional sex tourists," Air France spokesman Francois Brousse told a news conference. The airline said it is trying to reach people who, though not planning trips specifically to find child prostitutes, might be tempted once at their destination. "The objective is not to consider our passengers as sex tourists, but to inform and to prevent," Brousse said. The video messages also warn that "every person guilty of sexual relations with a child will be taken to court either in the country where the crime was committed, or in his country of origin." In France, those convicted of the crime face up to 10 years in prison and fines of one million francs. Air France designed the campaign in cooperation with the ECPAT association, a Bangkok-based international group that fights the sexual and commercial exploitation of children.

'No paramilitary link to Dublin shooting'

DUBLIN (R) — Irish police said Monday they had ruled out any paramilitary involvement in a shooting at a soccer match Sunday which left six people injured. "Police believe it's a local affair. It looks like the result of a row somewhere," a police spokeswoman said. Irish newspapers said the shooting was a family feud provoked by an argument in a local bar. A motorcyclist and gun-wielding pillion passenger, both wearing helmets, rode onto the pitch in what police at first said appeared to be an indiscriminate attack. Eyewitnesses told Irish media that the two figures appeared to be looking for someone in the crowd. Police said they were still searching for the motorbike and its riders. After firing several shots from the pitch, the motorcyclist sped to a road behind it and then across wasteland to a nearby housing estate, where more shots were heard, police said. Two of those injured were players at the match between minor league teams Dublin Celtic and Bawnogue Boys. The teams had begun a penalty shoot-out when the attack began in the area of Clondalkin west of central Dublin. Police said none of those injured was seriously wounded. They said pellets, rather than bullets had been fired and the weapon was likely to have been a sawn-off shotgun. Though the divided island is more known for the bloody conflict over Northern Ireland, Irish police have a major fight against crime gangs and a drugs problem on their hands.

Two World War II pilots killed together in plane crash

NEW PLYMOUTH, New Zealand (AFP) — Two 73-year-old men who trained together as World War II fighter pilots died together in a microlight plane crash, authorities said Monday. Police say the two, Stan Saleman and Terry Litt, probably died instantly when the microlight, owned by Litt, ploughed into a farm creek Sunday. The pair met as 18-year-olds in pilot training. Saleman's son, Clive Saleman, said the pair were too young to see action, only gaining their wings on the day the war against Japan ended. Clive Saleman described their deaths as "a bitter-sweet irony. It's incredible. There they are together back in 1944, and now to finish their lives together," he said. Civil Aviation said an attempt would be made to recover all the material, including wing fabric, which was scattered over paddocks in the crash-landing.

U.K. denies pressure for genetic crops freeze

LONDON (R) — The British government Monday denied asking companies producing genetically modified (GM) crops to wait another three years before commercial plantings, but did not dispute reports that a voluntary moratorium would go ahead.

"There has been no secret deal. We have always said that before full-scale commercialisation of GM crops takes place we have to be sure that there is no harm to the environment," a spokesman for Prime Minister Tony Blair told reporters.

"There is already an agreement with the industry that farm-scale trials are essential and we remain in discussions with the industry on how those trials should be conducted," he said.

"Should the industry decide to go ahead with a three-year voluntary moratorium that is a matter for them. We are interested in ensuring there is full proper environmental assessment

before full-scale commercial planting."

The spokesman said it was incorrect to say the government had asked the companies for a further delay in commercial planting.

Newspapers reported Monday that the companies were ready to bow to pressure from the government and halt commercial growing for three years following a wave of public concern.

According to an earlier agreement commercial planting would have begun in 2000.

Government officials — acting in the wake of a media scare about the possible dangers of GM crops — have held confidential talks with the firms at the centre of the controversy including Monsanto, Novartis and Zeneca.

Blair's government has also said it will introduce new rules on labelling of GM products sold in shops and restaurants.

Lord Sainsbury, the science minister who sits on

the cabinet's sub-committee on biotechnology, Sunday welcomed the prospect of a voluntary ban.

Agriculture Minister Nick Brown Sunday condemned the media for running a "series of scare stories" about GM foods.

"But I am strongly in favour of making sure that consumers are properly informed and that they can make their own choices," he told Sky TV.

Some scientists fear GM crops could threaten biodiversity and they also cite implications on wildlife and the environment, a build-up of antibiotic resistance and possible genetic damage to animals and humans.

But other researchers believe the dangers are exaggerated.

They say the possible benefits — including pest-resistance and harder plants that are cheaper, more nutritious and tastier — as well as higher crop yields outweigh any drawbacks.

Afghani factions agree to hold more peace talks

ASHGABAT, Turkmenistan (AP) — Afghanistan's rival factions said Monday they would meet again next month to work out the details of a tentative peace deal designed to end more than 20 years of war.

Sunday's initial agreement, which was short on details, calls for the creation of coalition government between the ruling Taleban Islamic movement and the northern alliance of opposition groups.

"We have agreed on the main principles of forming a unified and a widely representative government," said Wakil Ahmed Muttawakil, the head of the Taleban delegation at the talks.

A representative of the opposition delegation, said Younus Qanuni, said "the entire history of Afghanistan shows that if one group dominates the government, peace in Afghanistan is very fragile and never lasts for long."

The two sides said the new round of talks would be held next month in Afghanistan, but no date was announced.

Turkmenistan's President Saparmurad Niyazov met

Monday with both delegations separately at his residence in the capital Ashgabat before they headed back to Afghanistan.

The agreement has been greeted with caution in Afghanistan, where multiple peace plans have crumbled over the years. The war has destroyed much of the country and turned millions of Afghans into refugees.

The agreement calls for the two sides to:

— Release 20 prisoners each as soon as possible through the international committee of the red cross.

— Form a shared executive, legislature and judiciary.

— Continue talks in order to address remaining issues and to implement decisions already reached.

The agreement is the first on a shared government. The real work is expected to begin when the two sides try to negotiate the details of this power-sharing.

The opposition is made up of several groups, many of whom have squabbled in the past over government posi-

tions. Opposition figure

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who was named prime minister in a 1992 peace agreement, spent the next four years shelling Kabul because he disagreed with the inclusion of other groups in the government.

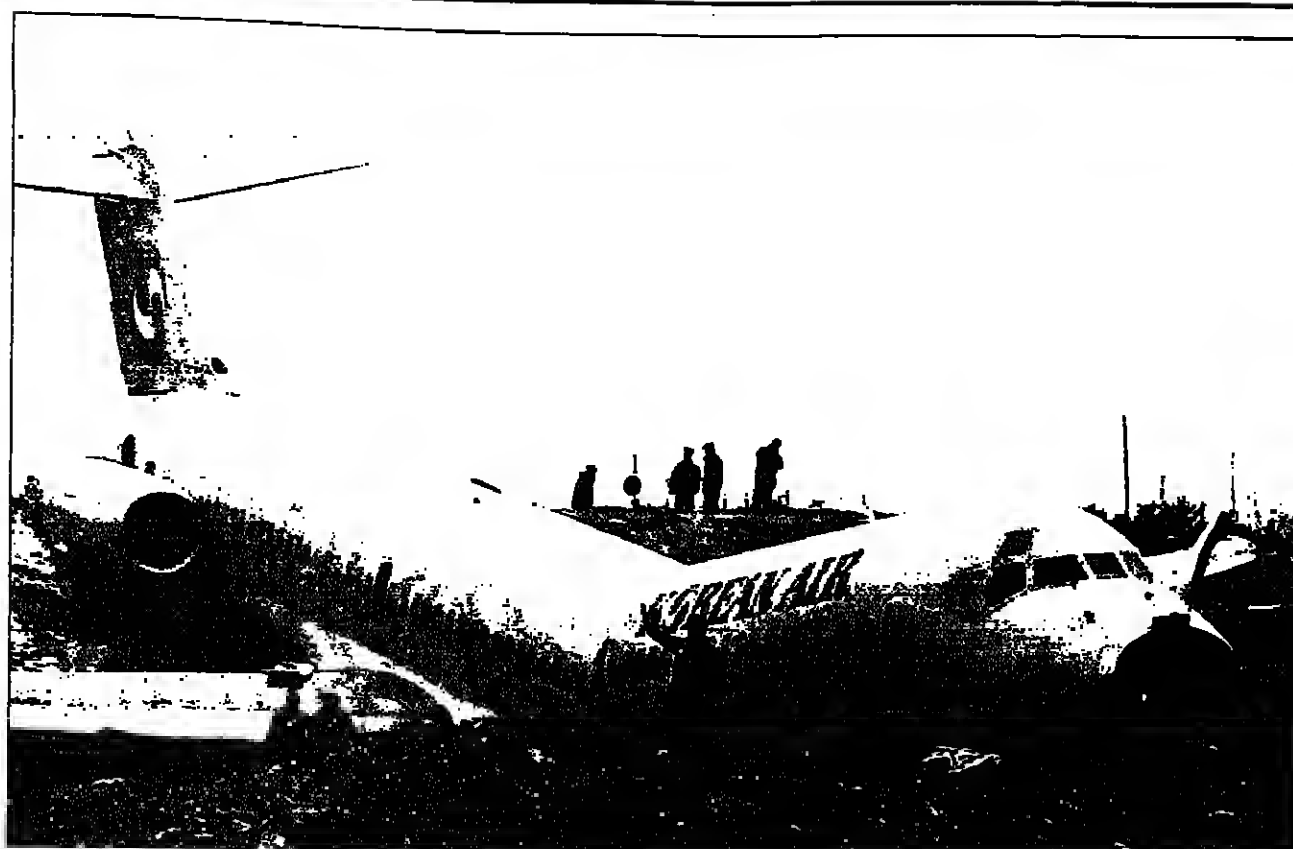
At the first round of talks in Turkmenistan in February, the two sides tentatively agreed to a ceasefire, but it was never honoured.

The Taleban control about 90 per cent of Afghanistan. They have imposed their strict interpretation of Islamic law that bars most women from work and education, forces men to wear beards and bans all kinds of light entertainment, including music.

The Taleban have been increasingly ostracised in the international community and chastised for their human rights record.

The northern opposition is led by former Defence Minister Ahmed Shah Massoud and rules the remaining 10 per cent of the country.

World News



Soldiers and firemen check the fractured fuselage of a Korean Air (KAL) MD-81 jet at Pohang airport 374 km southeast of Seoul. The jet skidded off the runway upon landing, injuring at least 13 passengers, three seriously. Brake failure is the suspected cause of the accident, the eighth involving a Korean Air jet in seven months (AFP photo)

Korean Air accident raises safety concerns

SEOUL (R) — Korean Air landing accidents have become so frequent that analysts say the airline seems to have serious safety problems.

"It is scary. We have seen Korean Air accidents so often in recent months," said Lee Hahn-Koo, president of Daewoo Research Institute after a Korean Air plane skidded off a runway Monday, injuring six aboard and suffering serious damage.

"The company must have many safety problems," he said.

The numerous landing accidents are leading equities analysts to worry about the airline's earnings outlook.

The MD-83 was carrying 156 passengers and crew on a domestic flight from Seoul to Pohang when it skidded in stormy weather on its second landing attempt, a spokesman said.

The accident, which the airline blamed on weather, was the ninth since August.

Korea's transportation ministry said.

A Korean Air spokesman said safety had been its top priority and it was working on various programmes to tighten safety measures, including consulting big foreign operators.

"We feel truly sorry about the accident. It happened despite our sincere efforts to prevent it," the spokesman said.

Shares of Korean Air dropped 5.2 per cent, or 600 won, to 11,000 Monday.

One analyst blamed the airline's alarming record on its recent cost-cutting drive. "Korean Air has recently dismissed many skilled workers in a restructuring drive," said Kim Ho-Cheol, analyst at CS first Boston.

"I believe that was a main cause of the accident." Analysts fretted over the risk of a big crash. "Today's accident leads us to imagine something really terrible could happen next time," said an analyst at a

local research institute.

Korean Air's problems also stemmed from a rigid management style, moulded by decades of monopoly in the domestic market, he said.

"The national flag carrier still maintains many of the habits of old days when there were no competitors," said the analyst.

The transportation ministry warned the airline it might broaden punitive measures already in force if an inquiry into Monday's incident revealed any faults.

In October the ministry responded to the numerous accidents by ordering the airline to cut its domestic flights by 20 per cent in the following six months.

The ministry said it imposed the punishments because Korean Air had damaged confidence in airline safety and inflicted significant damage on the national economy.

The ministry said it was waiting for a final report

into the investigation of a Korean Air crash in Guam in 1997 when a Boeing 747 flew into a hillside, killing all but 28 of the 254 aboard.

In August last year a two-year-old Korean Air 747-400 suffered massive damage, estimated at around \$100 million, when it careered off a runway at Seoul.

Korean Air earned 297 billion won (\$241 million) in net profits in 1998 largely on gains from selling aircraft.

The flagship of the Hanjin group, Korean Air lost 397 billion won in 1997 due to the fall of the national currency.

Korean Air's sole domestic competitor is unlisted Asiana Airlines, which was founded in February 1988.

An Asiana 747 rammed its wing into a Russian plane while parking at Anchorage, Alaska, in November. According to industry media reports, both aircraft were severely damaged.

Weapons search stepped-up on Indonesian island

AMBON, Indonesia (AFP) — Military authorities

Monday stepped up a drive to disarm civilians in an effort to end months of bloody Muslim-Christian riots that have devastated the city.

They moved amid unconfirmed reports that further sectarian violence had broken out on the neighbouring island of Haruku, where several people were said to have been injured.

The head of the Maluku military command, Colonel Karel Robert Ralahalu, went to Haruku Monday aboard a helicopter and had not returned by dusk, his staff said.

In Ambon, the military set up roadblocks, searched both passers-by and passengers in vehicles, and checked all vehicles for weapons.

At least two high school students were seen being arrested and taken away to military headquarters after they were found carrying knives.

Ambon and several other areas in Maluku province

have been rocked by clashes between the Muslim and Christian communities since mid-January, leaving more than 200 people dead.

The security authorities have repeatedly called on the population to surrender weapons and warned that raids and street checks would continue. Those resisting seizure of their weapons would be dealt with harshly.

Ralahalu late Sunday told journalists the authorities will set up several centres where people can surrender their arms.

"The surrender of sharp weapons and homemade bombs will be held simultaneously at a time yet to be determined, after an agreement has been reached between leaders of the two sides in the conflict," Ralahalu said.

Two helicopters, from the police and the navy, patrolled the sky over Ambon from early Monday and soldiers were put on standby in areas where violence has flared in the past

weeks. Several large banners, exhorting people to end conflicts and violence, hung above a number of streets in downtown Ambon.

"Peace is not a mere promise but should also be worked for," one of the banners said.

Public transport returned to the streets again Monday after disappearing late Saturday when another corpse was discovered. Pedicabs, absent since violence broke out again last month, also began to reappear.

Several shops and businesses reopened Monday, and schools resumed although not all students and teachers turned up.

A total of 37 people in Ambon were found Saturday carrying various weapons including cutlasses, knives, spears, arrows and petrol bombs.

Ralahalu said Sunday, quoted by a local journalist, that a raid conducted at the Yos Sudarso harbour of Ambon, packed with peo-

ple fleeing the city on board two large passenger inter-island ferries, yielded 103 sharp weapons.

Another raid on a house in the Waria Atas village found two air rifles, four homemade guns and ammunition, arrows, slingshots and nearly completed makeshift guns.

The military took command of riot control after the latest wave of violence hit central Ambon late Wednesday.

In Jakarta, military chief General Wiranto said the military were considering reactivating military commands which had been scrapped under a restructuring programme in the 1980s, including the Maluku command.

"We will set up again provincial military commands, in regions where we think they are needed," Wiranto said during a ceremony at the National Defence Institute.

The Irian Jaya-based military command currently oversees security in the Maluku province.

N. Korea denounces claim that 3 million died of famine

SEOUL (AFP) — Stalinist North

Korea Monday denounced claims that three million people had died of famine during the past few years.

The verbal attack came as South Korea launched a campaign to raise funds to help the devastated North. Pyongyang accused South Korea's intelligence agency of spreading rumours after claims by Hwang Jang-Yop, the highest official to defect here from North Korea, that "at the end of last year, the famine has caused more than three million deaths."

The vicious anti-DPRK (North Korea) diatribe came at a time when the South Korean intelligence service was zealously spreading a rumour that three million died of starvation in the northern half of Korea in the past four years," said Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

It quoted the spokesman for the flood damage rehabilitation committee as saying the move was "a bid to frustrate international humanitarian aid."

"It proves that with a view to using international humanitarian aid for the disintegration and overthrow of the system in the northern half of Korea hostile elements are now turning to an extremely despicable means," said North Korea.

Hwang said in an interview with French daily Le Monde that the total, based partly on the Communist Party's central committee's own figures, estimated 500,000 people died in 1995, plus about a million a year from 1996 to 1998.

Hwang lives in South Korea

after defecting from North Korea through Beijing in February 1997.

While acknowledging the situation in the capital Pyongyang was less serious, Hwang, the North's former chief ideologue and architect of its juche (self-reliance) philosophy, said: "Even secret police, who have considerable power, asked leaders like me to help them find food."

While terming medical and food aid to North Korea "necessary," he said "economic aid signifies military assistance."

North Korea's KCNA report was released as South Korea's Red Cross launched a fund-raising campaign to provide Pyongyang with fertilisers aimed at helping the country survive following a severe famine since 1995 when a series of natural disasters hit the country.

"We are hoping to come up with enough funds to send North Korea about 100,000 tonnes of fertiliser," a Red Cross official said.

South Korea's Red Cross last week announced plans to send the aid to North Korea.

South Korea officials said North Korea's fertiliser production stood at 625,000 tonnes last year, far short of its annual demand of 1.7 million tonnes.

The World Food Programme has warned that North Koreans were still dying of famine, with the population completely dependent on international food aid at least for this month.

The U.N. body has appealed for \$225 million to provide 533,000 tonnes of food this year. So far, it has received \$101 million.

Chinese premier says allegations of nuclear theft a 'fallacy'

BEIJING (AP) —

Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji Monday denied allegations that China stole U.S. nuclear weapons secrets and said U.S.-China ties were being sacrificed to partisan struggles in Washington.

Despite the nuclear secrets scandal, Zhu said he still planned to travel to the United States next month. He acknowledged, however, that the visit will be tough, given the espionage allegations and other disputes dogging U.S.-China ties.

"There has emerged an anti-China wave in the United States. This makes us feel uneasy," Zhu said at a news conference after the closing of the legislature's annual session.

"I don't think my visit to the United States will bring me into a minefield but I do expect to encounter some hostile or some unfriendly atmosphere there."

Zhu dismissed suspicions that China stole U.S. nuclear weapons technology as "fallacy" and noted that China had first built and tested atomic weapons on its own.

"China is fully capa-

ble of developing any military technology. It's only a matter of time," he said. "Why should China have taken such big political and moral risks to steal military secrets from others?"

U.S. investigators fear China acquired technology that allowed it to make smaller warheads that could modernise its nuclear arsenal.

A Taiwanese-born American scientist, Wen Ho Lee, was fired last week from a U.S. weapons lab amid suspicions that he shared secrets with Beijing.

Zhu noted that investigators have not found enough evidence to arrest Lee and suggested that he was being unfairly targeted.

He also blamed the scandal on political manoeuvring in Washington.

"China-U.S. relations are being sacrificed to internal struggles in the United States," Zhu said.

Zhu said he would work on his visit to repair U.S.-China ties. He also said his visit was designed to "let me tell you the truth and also to let you vent your anger."

African defence chiefs in Swaziland for talks

JOHANNESBURG (R) —

African defence and security officials gathered in the tiny kingdom of Swaziland Monday to discuss conflicts raging in the region and measures to prevent more from breaking out in the future.

The meeting of intelligence and military experts from the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) will be followed by ministerial talks Wednesday and Thursday. SADC officials told Reuters.

The annual inter-defence and security committee of the SADC will review the escalating war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and rising tension between Angola and Zambia, they said.

"This meeting is an annual event designed to share ideas on security and defence among members. But this

year, we have urgent and important issues to discuss," an SADC official said, speaking from the body's headquarters in Botswana.

"Of particular importance are the war in the Congo, tension between two SADC members, Angola and Zambia, and the war in Angola. We shall also take time to look at security in Lesotho after last year's attempt to overthrow the government there," the official added.

Regional efforts to secure a ceasefire in the Congo have so far failed. President Laurent Kabila refuses to talk to the rebels of the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), led by academic Ernest Wamba Dia Wamba.

The Rwandan- and Ugandan-backed RCD rose

against Kabila on Aug. 2, accusing him of nepotism, corruption, incompetence and failure to chart a clear political programme for Africa's third-largest country.

Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and Chad have all sent troops to fight for Kabila, who deposed veteran dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in 1997.

Zimbabwean President Frederick Chiluba, mandated by the SADC to secure peace in the Congo, has tried but so far failed to bring about a truce in the vast central African nation.

Chiluba's mediation exercise has been undermined by Kabila's main ally, Angola, which accuses his government of backing the Angolan rebel group UNITA, led by Jonas Savimbi.

Chiluba has repeatedly

denied the charges, which he says stem from his refusal to allow Angolan government forces to attack UNITA from the rear, via Zambian territory.

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe warned two weeks ago that the rising tension between Lusaka and Luanda could erupt into a military conflict.

The Zambian capital was hit recently by still unexplained bomb blasts which left the city of three million people without power and water for several days.

UNITA, the Portuguese acronym for national union for the total independence of Angola, has seized huge tracts of territory and put several provincial capitals under siege since fresh fighting erupted on Dec. 5.

Defence in Anwar trial rests its case

KUALA LUMPUR (AP) —

The judge in the sex and corruption trial of dissident Anwar Ibrahim dealt his defence a stunning blow Monday by refusing to hear crucial defence witnesses.

Defence lawyers said the witnesses, some of whom have served jail terms for allegedly having homosexual relations with Anwar, were tortured by police "until they fabricated stories" against the jailed politician.

High Court Judge Augustine Paul ruled, however, that the evidence by the witnesses appeared to have "absolutely no direct connection" with the case and was inadmissible.

Anwar reacted stoically to the developments. "It's OK. It's not surprising," he said. When asked by reporters how long he expected to be sentenced, Anwar replied: "Two, four years. It makes no difference."

Anwar, 51, who was sacked

and arrested last September, has repeatedly said that all 10 charges against him were fabricated by his political enemies who worked with the police to end the challenge he posed to Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

"We are taken aback," defence lawyer Christopher Fernando said after the judge ruled against them. "We feel that crucial relevant evidence has been shut out."

The trial has entered its final stage after 72 hearings that began on Nov. 2. The judge adjourned the hearings until March 21 for closing arguments by both sides, after which he will pronounce his verdict.

The success of the defence in Anwar's trial on four counts of abuse of power depended on evidence to prove police conspired with politicians to frame the client.

The charges relate to Anwar's alleged attempts to

cover up his sexual trysts, which the prosecution says include a string of homosexual acts for which he is separately charged.

Each of the four counts carries a jail term of 14 years and a fine of 20,000 ringgit (\$5,000). If convicted, Anwar will also be barred from entering politics for five years.

While one of the people whom Anwar allegedly sodomised is the prosecution's star witness, the others have been jailed for up to six months or have faced detention.

Although police say they were jailed on the basis of their confessions, each one since said they were intimidated by the police to make false allegations against Anwar.

The judge has dealt several crucial blows to the defence throughout the trial.

Shortly after the prosecution rested its case, Paul allowed the four charges to be amend-

ed to lower the burden of proof.

Then he barred lawyers from introducing any evidence referring to allegations of illicit sex, effectively narrowing the scope of Anwar's defence team.

Gurbachan Singh, one of Anwar's lawyers, said that people who were close to Anwar or worked with him had been grabbed by the police and threatened with serious offences if they did not make allegations against Anwar.

Among those the prosecution names as Anwar's alleged homosexual partners are his adopted brother Sukma Dermawan, his former speech writer Munawar Ahmad Anees and Anwar's wife's tailor, Mior Abdul Razak.

A tennis partner of Anwar, who is alleged to have set up sexual rendezvous for him, is in jail for illegal possession of weapons.



A Cambodian boy rests his head against a bird cage as he falls asleep towards the end of a day of selling birds on the streets of Phnom Penh. The birds (swallows) sell for one thousand riel (25 cents) each to customers who are prepared to give the birds their freedom and at the same time make a good-luck wish (AFP photo)

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Responsible Editor
 Elia Nasrallah

Editorial and Advertising offices
 Jordan Press Foundation,
 University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman

Telephones: 5684311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585

Facsimile: 5696183

E-mail: jotimes@go.com.jo

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Watering peace

ISRAEL'S INTENTION not to provide Jordan this summer with agreed-upon supplies of water, in violation of the peace treaty, has rekindled thoughts of a repeat of last year's water crisis.

Last summer, despite the fact that we drew water from Israel, we found ourselves without water for weeks at a time. No running water in homes, no bottled water in the stores. This year, thanks to the Israeli decision, 4.5 million people will have to contend with some 25 million cubic metres less.

The government of Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh assumes office at an extremely difficult time, and the challenges it faces are huge. But Rawabdeh can count on the positive energies, good faith, and political maturity that this nation has demonstrated during times of crisis.

So, before the government announces further rationing throughout the country, we want to remind it of a few facts:

— That domestic use accounts for only 25 per cent of the country's total water consumption.

— That international experts have assessed that water losses and waste claim over 50 per cent of water in the cities' networks. Half the losses are due to poor maintenance of the networks, while the other half to illegal consumption.

— That, last summer, while many were struggling to find bottled water to drink, and parents were forced to send their children to stay with relatives in their hometowns, we have seen prices of water tanks rocket up to JD80

— That an estimated 320 million cubic metres of water are exploited every year by a handful of influential landowners who, to the best of our and previous ministers' knowledge, are not even paying for it.

— That, notwithstanding the current declared "state of emergency," a considerable number of private wells are pumping a great amount of water with little return to the national economy.

— That most agriculture production is still focused on water-intensive crops, such as bananas and tomatoes.

The honest, hard-working Jordanians, who have always paid for each drop of water they used and who have done and endured so much to build this country, expect the prime minister to keep these facts well in mind, while he charts the "tough" measures he announced yesterday.

Jordan is obviously reaching the breaking point, and indeed, Jordanians are already receiving per capita much less water than Israeli citizens receive.

While we share the conviction that a real solution to the exacerbating water problem can only be regional and comprehensive, we also urge the Likud-led government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu not only to read the treaty, but to also read peace.

Drought, an "act of God," could not possibly be mentioned in the treaty to constitute a "reason" for lack of full implementation.

But the "spirit of peace" should prompt partners to share whatever resources are available, because satisfying one party's needs at the expense of the other contradicts the spirit of peace.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek said His Majesty King Hussein had expressed his desire to bring about changes at the highest levels, but died before being able to implement them. However, King Hussein made the most important change, by appointing his eldest son His Majesty King Abdullah as heir to the Throne instead of his brother HRH Prince Hassan, and King Abdullah has followed in his father's footsteps and changed the government, and the leadership of the Royal Court. The writer ruled out the possibility of changes to the earlier launched economic reform programme arguing it only needs activating. The country's position vis-a-vis the peace process remains the same and relations with other Arab countries cannot be changed, said Fanek. He ruled out the possibility of any review of the controversial Press and Publications Law or the Elections Law because King Hussein had previously accepted the laws. Fanek, however, expected that changes at the highest levels would continue, and voiced his support for the King who, he said, is going in the right direction.

Al Dastour's Mazen Saket said the objective of U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen's visit was to declare that the U.S. policy against Iraq will continue. However, some Arab officials voiced clear objections against such a policy, noted Saket. Since the allied attacks on Iraq before the Holy Month of Ramadan, the U.S. is engaged in a war of attrition against the country's military, economic and civilian sites, the writer said. Regardless of the Iraqi political performance after the strikes, the "silly" U.S. excuse, that it is defending itself by bombing the country, underlined that the superpower is violating U.N. resolutions in pursuit of its own interests to destroy Iraq and weaken the Arabs, said the writer, who added that only in the next months will it become clear what the plans of the U.S. and its allies are.

Israel's choice: life or a trickster's perpetual pain?

A CONSTANT challenge in analysing Arab-Israeli events is to separate significant policy developments from entertaining election posturing. This week has given us examples of both, to which we might add a fourth category: the transparent political tricksterism of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Confusion Director David Bar-Ilan.

In the category of significant policy developments, I would place last week's European Union note to the Israeli government stating that the EU views all of Jerusalem, east and west, as a "corpus separatum," or separate body, whose status must be negotiated by Israelis and Palestinians. This direct European challenge to Israel's self-proclaimed sovereignty over all of Jerusalem refers back to the corpus separatum concept of the 1947 U.N. partition resolution on Palestine. This powerful, if still symbolic, European rejection of Israeli policies vis-a-vis the Palestinians is also a reminder that the core elements of the Arab-Israeli conflict — Jerusalem, land, refugees, and others — remain to be negotiated in an equitable manner; such an equitable resolution must be very different from Israel's arrogant and violent unilateral self-assertion in lands that are dear to, and belong to, both Israelis and

Palestinians.

Also meaningful was last week's public statement by Dennis Ross, the United States' special envoy for Arab-Israeli negotiations. He called Israel's continuing policy of building new colonies and settlements in occupied Palestinian lands "very destructive to the pursuit of peace precisely because it predetermines and prejudices what ought to be negotiated." He also repeated the American view that the Palestinians had done more than the Israelis to implement the Wye accords, and that "the Israelis have not yet carried out any of their phase two obligations (of the Wye accords)."

How fascinating: the world's two most powerful political and economic forces simultaneously criticise Israel on the two issues — Jerusalem and Jewish settlements — on which Israel has been publicly and consistently adamant.

While not new, the U.S. and EU statements nevertheless both pack a powerful political punch for Israel at a most crucial moment in Arab-Israeli peace-making, shortly before the Arafat-Clinton meeting in Washington in late March, a possible Palestinian declaration of statehood in early May, the Israeli elections in mid-May, and the expected resumption of both the Wye accord implementa-

tion and the final status negotiations this summer.

The Israeli government has reacted predictably, mainly via Netanyahu and his Confusion Adviser David Bar-Ilan — the modern, politically serious Semitic version of the Laurel and Hardy comedy team: one pounds the table, raises his voice, and grimaces violently, while the other takes the low-key, soft-spoken, slightly perplexed, "golly, we're only trying to take care of the babies" approach. They restated Israel's view of all Jerusalem as its eternal, united capital under its sole and exclusive sovereignty, and its determined right to continue building and expanding Jewish settler-colonies in occupied Arab lands.

At the same time, last week the Israeli army stopped removing Israeli settlers from hilltops they had grabbed in the occupied West Bank (near the settlement of Itamar, near Nablus, and near the settlements of Tene and Omarin, near the Palestinian town of Dahariya in the southern West Bank). The call for Jewish settler-colonists to grab hilltops in the West Bank, by the way, was not made by some right-wing fanatics beyond the reach of the government and trying to destroy the peace process, but rather by two senior Israeli cabinet ministers, Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon and

A view from the Fourth Circle



Rami G. Khouri

Defence Minister Moshe Arens.

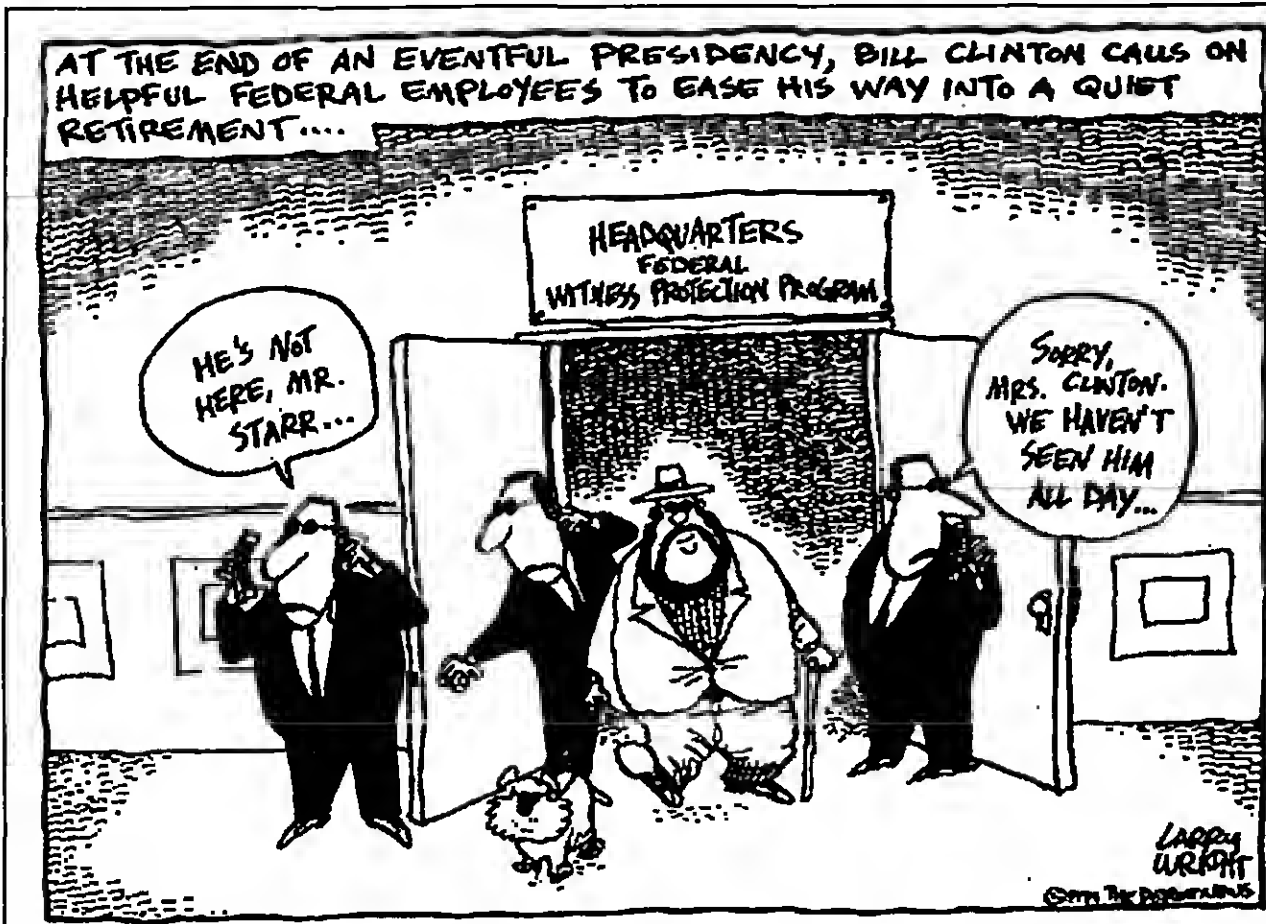
Meanwhile, the Israeli government and occupation authorities continue to demolish a handful of Palestinian homes every week, cancel the Jerusalem residence rights of Palestinians whose families have lived there for hundreds of years in some cases, and unilaterally take Palestinian lands for bypass roads that link Israeli colonies in a macabre Jewish-made Highway of Apartheid.

Not surprisingly, Arab, European, and American patience with Israel is fast disappearing: the desperate Palestinians consider a virtually meaningless unilateral declaration of statehood as their appropriate response to Israel, the U.S. and EU come in with strong statements on

Jerusalem and settler-colonies that are sure to anger many Israelis, and this Israeli government finds itself pursuing increasingly isolated, untenable and extremist policies on core Arab-Israeli issues.

The unavoidable danger in this is that Netanyahu, also bewildered about what to do in south Lebanon, may again seek refuge in the ideological and emotional sewers of Israeli electoral politics. He may stimulate and then appeal to all that is ugly and self-tormenting in the Israeli psyche of lonely vulnerability in what is often seen as a perpetually hostile and anti-Semitic world.

I know that many Israelis do not particularly care if we Arabs say these things, because Israelis are busy building special roads to bypass us, to make us invisible, to make believe that we do not exist in their world. It will be interesting, however, to see how Israelis react to the more public and critical posture of Europe and the U.S., which invites Israelis to live in a world of reality, acceptance, and normalcy, rather than a world of fantasy, perpetual hostility, and pain. This may be the great choice the Israeli people are asked to make in their election in two months' time. I hope they draw on their best instincts — and remember what Moses told them in the Plains of Moab — and choose life.



The Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the new regime

By Pascal B. Karmy

THE REFUGEE problem in Lebanon, as in other host states, will be dealt with by Israel and the Palestinian National Authority during the final status negotiations, that is to say after the end of the interim period as stipulated in the Oslo accords of 1993.

In Lebanon, the situation is especially acute, although the coming to power of the new Lebanese President Emile Lahoud and the new Prime Minister Salim Al Hoss, raises hopes that the situation will ameliorate.

In Lebanon, Palestinian refugees can work in the private sector or carry on business or own property, subject to obtaining the necessary permits or authorisations from the ministries or departments concerned. In other words, they are treated as foreigners residing in Lebanon. (It must be pointed out that thousands of Palestinians who took refuge in Lebanon in 1948 were able to obtain Lebanese nationality either through the courts or through the ministry of foreign affairs or by presidential decrees on the ground that either their ancestors were Lebanese or they could be considered as Lebanese expatriates; the great

majority retained their Palestinian nationality).

Furthermore, Lebanon, because of the delicate and sensitive balance of power between the various sectarian and religious communities, cannot grant citizenship across the board to Palestinians living there and it cannot allow them to work in any profession without specific permit or allow them to hold official government posts, out of fear that the balance might be upset.

Since the Lebanese civil war of 1975 which endured up to 1990, more restrictions were imposed upon the Palestinians. They were not allowed to practise hundreds of professions: medicine, law, engineering, education even if they were holders of the highest professional qualifications. The Palestinian camps in Lebanon are under constant control and supervision by the Lebanese army. Even building materials are not allowed to be brought to the camps for fear of extending camp area except surreptitiously. In addition, those who travelled abroad were not allowed to return to Lebanon even if they were holders of the Lebanese Document de Voyage (a document similar to a passport which enables Palestinians to

move and travel abroad, and has been recognised by many Western countries including the U.S. and Eastern European states).

Already, however, the new Lebanese regime has allowed Palestinian refugees to travel abroad and return to Lebanon on the basis of the Document de Voyage without requiring advance permission for a return visa as was the case before. It is hoped also that the new regime will relax the many restrictions on work by the Palestinians. I do not think that the new regime will go as far as Syria or Jordan, due to the special situation and make-up of the Lebanese state.

The Palestinian refugees in Lebanon count more than three hundred thousand. Although they wish to be granted more freedom and expect the lifting of at least some of the restrictions on their work, this does not mean that they accept their permanent settlement or reintegration in Lebanon, inasmuch as their final aim is to be repatriated to their homeland Palestine.

The writer was an advocate in Palestine in 1944 and, for many years, legal officer at UNRWA headquarters in Beirut and Vienna

Footnote

I AM very happy that we have ratified the Ottawa Treaty on landmines for which Her Majesty Queen Noor takes full credit. It was Queen Noor who persuaded us, and correctly so, to sign and ratify the treaty. The ratification of the Ottawa Treaty is a credit to our country, culture and religion. I cannot imagine any member of Parliament objecting to it on any legitimate ground. However, we did not pass it through Parliament, and this could lead us onto dangerous ground.

The same applies to the several human rights conventions that we have proudly and correctly ratified. Special credit goes to the late prime minister Sharif Abdul Hamid Sharaf who saw to it that we ratified the International Covenant on Civil

and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the two principal pillars of contemporary international human rights law.

But all these magnificent treaty obligations remain "unjustifiable" in our own courts simply because we bypassed Parliament. By so doing, we failed to make these treaty obligations including the Convention on the Rights of the Child part of our domestic legislation.

How can we then rectify this major omission? Admittedly it would be embarrassing to submit to Parliament international obligations which we have already ratified. Statedly speaking, whether we have ratified these legally-binding treaties constitutionally or otherwise is not really the business of the international commu-

Waleed M. Sadi

nity. We are held accountable regardless. It is only for the purposes of domestic law that we need to rectify this situation.

We need to move expeditiously, because as long as our treaty obligations cannot be invoked in a court of law, we as Jordanians cannot raise rights under them.

I respectfully submit that the way to go about correcting this situation is to talk to deputies quietly and convince each and every one of them that they should vote for them in a closed session of Parliament. None of these conventions, which are all sound, reasonable and conform to our culture and religion, especially if they are viewed in an enlightened manner, should pose any problems for our deputies and senators.

Letters to the editor

Clarification from the Internet Service Providers in Jordan

TODAY SIX commercial Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are serving close to 30,000 users all over Jordan. These ISPs are fully licensed by the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC). The first Internet licence was issued in 1995, since then 10 more licences were issued.

The Internet is fast becoming a necessity and an indispensable tool for progress in the 21st century. All six ISPs realise this, and wish to deliver this message to all in Jordan.

Contrary to public belief, these ISPs are all still waiting to make a profit. Some of these ISPs include foreign investors, who have contributed in cash and know-how that helped advance the technology in the data communications field in Jordan. Why you may ask are these ISPs not making profits and not providing lower cost and more efficient services? The facts are:

1. The high costs paid by the ISPs for international connectivity, which exceeds JD75,000 per month for some ISPs.

2. The high cost paid by the ISPs for local telephone lines, which amount to JD335 per line, knowing that ISPs use hundreds of these lines to provide the Internet service.

3. The 15 per cent revenue sharing tax which is levied by the TRC on all ISPs.

4. The 10 per cent value added tax which is levied by the government on all Internet invoices.

5. There were improvements in the Jordan Telecommunications Corporation (JTC) services over the last year, however there still remains bureaucracy and frequent delays in obtaining international connectivity and local phone lines from the JTC. These delays exceed three months in some cases, if not more.

Despite all these obstacles, the ISPs have provided a world class Internet service with advanced technology, and is employing over 500 people.

The ISPs were very encouraged by His Majesty the late King Hussein's directive allowing the ISPs to use Hashem I Earth Station for the International Internet Connectivity. Some ISPs made price reductions especially for students as a result of this directive. However, in order to provide the Internet to public schools in rural areas, these schools must first get reliable telephone lines from the JTC, and second, they must get personal computers and be trained in their usage, before being able to access and use the Internet.

In conclusion, better Internet service in Jordan is possible only with the cooperation of the TRC and the JTC. The JTC in its role as the sole provider for international connectivity and local lines can help the ISPs to provide the Jordanian public with cheaper and quicker access to the Internet, thus realising the dream of His Majesty King Hussein in a more efficient and faster way.

Global One
 NETS
 FirstNet
 JointNet
 JoNet

What's the difference?

IT IS remarkable that when an Arab leader like Assad is elected by 99% of the people, we in the West find this to be undemocratic or an example of the tyrannical nature of the Arab World. However, when our illustrious senate votes 98-1 against the establishment of a Palestinian state, we Americans slap each other on the back and brag about how much we savour human rights and democracy around the world. Am I missing something? Is there that great gap between the numbers 98 and 99, or are we just trying to protect "the only democracy in the Middle East" against an "undemocratic" Palestine? One serious question needs to be raised and answered quickly. Are 98% of all Israelis against the establishment of the state of Palestine?

Chris Davis
 Dallas
 Texas
 sdavis@flash.net

Features

Corruption hinders development, abets global crises

Below is the text of U.S. Vice President Al Gore's keynote speech at last month's Global Forum to Fight Corruption in Washington, attended by representatives from eighty-nine countries

ONCE IN a rare while, the cycles of time present us with what historians call an open moment — when some combination of luck and circumstance allow us the chance to choose a better future. We are in such a moment. We have the chance now to draw on our oldest ethical values, our strongest democratic principles, and our newest tools and technologies, to do a better job than any people before us in creating a world that is not just better off, but better — for all who inhabit the earth.

In the Old Testament, Moses teaches the people of Israel: "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous."

Some thousand years later, Confucius found in China a corrupt government, and began to set the high moral standards he believed would make for a more harmonious society.

Some thousand years after that, the Koran says: "O my people! Give full measure and full weight in justice... And do not evil in the earth, causing corruption."

Corruption is an old affliction, and no corruption is more damaging than the corruption that is the focus of this conference: corruption among justice and security officials, those pledged to uphold the law. In the information age, the speed of information, the movement of capital, the increase of trade have all magnified the potential impact of official corruption.

Official corruption can speed environmental destruction, accelerate the drug trade, even encourage the smuggling of biological, chemical or nuclear weapons materials. Economically, corruption represents an arbitrary, exorbitant tax. It can lead to wasteful government spending, bigger deficits, greater income inequality, and a crisis of confidence that can spark capital flight, crash the economy, destabilise governments, and put people halfway around the world out of work.

While the debate can rage all night about the precise role of corruption in the global financial crisis, there can be no serious doubt that the crisis has been aggravated by corruption. And now — in spite of the general prosperity of the U.S. economy, some American sectors are hurting a great deal from that crisis. Of course, at the epicentre of the financial crisis, it is far worse — millions of Asian families feel they have lost their financial future.

The point is — corruption in one country can make its impact felt around the world. No country can seal itself off from the impact of corruption beyond its borders, and therefore every nation must work with every other nation to fight corruption wherever it is in the world.

At the same time, to work well together, we must all acknowledge a central truth: No nation has a monopoly on virtue. None has a corner on corruption. And no nation has the right to lecture any other.

Just this month, three U.S. Immigration and Naturalisation Service employees, charged with patrolling the U.S.-Mexico border near Nogales, were arrested for their involvement in a scheme to smuggle illegal drugs into the U.S. The alleged role was simple — looking the other way. The alleged crime was vile — betraying the trust of their country, and selling out the millions of young people we seek to protect.

The large amount of illegal drugs that pass through the 300 ports of entry into the United States — combined with the enormous amount of money drug traffickers will spend trying to corrupt U.S. officials — can put enormous pressure on the professionalism of officers from the DEA, INS, Customs, and Treasury. We are attentive to it. We are addressing it. But let's be clear: The stakes are too high — the lives of our children too precious — to waste time posturing about it. We in the United States must have a serious, rigorous discussion of every possible avenue for guarding against corruption — both here and abroad. And I want to welcome each and everyone of you to the United States, and thank you for coming to this conference to join us in this critical three-day conversation on fighting corruption.

A sample of any week's newspapers, TV, and magazines might suggest corruption is on the rise. We read and hear everywhere about its infestation in former empires and its choke hold on young democracies. Today, the young democracies seem longer; reach of corruption seems longer; its power to shake the world seems

'Cynics no doubt will mock any optimism in the fight against corruption. But let me remind you of the words of George Bernard Shaw: "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world: the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man"'

greater. And yet, there is hope. Hope in the successful approaches of the past. And even greater hope in the early and growing successes of today. There is an important reason why — at a time of apparent rise in global corruption — that corruption may, be suddenly and surprisingly more vulnerable than before. Cynics no doubt will mock any optimism in the fight against corruption. But let me remind you of the words of George Bernard Shaw: "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world: the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man."

Let me review for you today the forces that can assist our fight against corruption, and suggest to you that we have a secret weapon that is unique to our time in history, and could turn the fight in our favour.

First the world's tolerance for corruption is fading fast. Gone are the days when corruption was written off merely as a cost of doing business. Today, in more and more parts of the world, corruption is seen as it should be seen: as serious crime with devastating consequences — as a cold, vicious, often violent sacrifice of citizen security, for a narrow, greedy, private, personal profit on the part of a crooked official.

As evidence of the rising interest in fighting corruption, let me explain that we initially expected to have representatives from about 40 countries at this conference. In fact, we have representatives from eighty-nine. Some nations were so eager to come they even cautioned us that our bilateral relations would suffer if they were not invited. And so we are here, squeezed to the walls, because of the rising intolerance of corruption, and the rising sense that it is time to take action against it. Victor Hugo once wrote: "An invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea whose time has come." Fighting corruption is an idea whose time has come.

A second important force in our favour is leadership. We are blessed to have in the world today — and many are in this room right now — very prominent leaders who have placed the fight against corruption at the heart of their public mission. There is no substitute for leadership by example — especially on the issue of official corruption.

The 13th-century Persian poet Saadi told this story to illustrate the importance of leadership. A king was moving with his army through the land when he came upon some beautiful apple trees. The king asked for an apple, ate it, and suddenly noticed his top general had gone to pay the owner the

price of the apple.

When the general returned, the king challenged him: "Why did you pay the man? He must have been flattered to have a king take a piece of his fruit."

"Your Majesty," his general explained, "If you had taken even one apple, your army would have taken the whole orchard."

People are guided by the behaviour of the men and women they look to for leadership.

A third force in our favour in our fight against corruption is the growing trend toward government reform — or reinventing government. Just five weeks ago I hosted right here at the State Department an international conference on Reinventing Government — the effort to reinstitute reforms that can help government work better and cost less. There is one especially striking parallel between that conference and this one — namely: in many cases, the very steps you would take to reform government to reduce corruption are the same steps you would take to reform government to increase efficiency.

As an example, confusing regulations can foster corruption. Adopting fewer, clearer regulations would help reduce corruption. That is also a principle of reinventing government.

Monopoly power can foster corruption. Diluting monopoly by privatising some functions would help reduce corruption. That is also a principle of reinventing government.

Lack of accountability can foster corruption. Increasing accountability by focusing on measurable results would help reduce corruption. That is also a principle of reinventing government.

The point here is one often made by students and scholars of international corruption, namely: the fight against corruption is not separate from the process of government reform. They are both efforts to make sure self-government works for its citizens.

A fourth factor in our favour in the fight against corruption is ethical behaviour. Robert Klitgaard, Dean of The Rand Graduate School in Santa Monica, California, has developed a formula to gauge the likelihood of corruption. He describes it: $C = M + D - A$ or "corruption equals monopoly plus discretion minus accountability." If you have a monopoly, and you have discretion in applying the rules, and no one is holding you accountable, you are far likelier to become corrupt.

I think that is a very insightful analysis, particularly if the formula takes into account what I would call the "inner accountability" of conscience. I believe conscience is innate, universal, and one of the most important tools in the fight against corruption.

upright. This desire explains the power of conscience. If we wish to see ourselves as ethically upright, we will avoid situations where we could be seen doing wrong.

This explains not only the power of our private conscience, but also the power of our public conscience — our clergy, our priests, ministers, monks, nuns, mullahs — who represent God in society. They are the public voice of conscience. They command enormous respect throughout society. They have immense power to tilt the scales toward good in public life. I look forward to their work here at the conference, and to having their ongoing participation in society's efforts to root out corruption.

If we accept that people, driven by conscience, really do prefer to be clean and honest, we can see the wisdom in reinventing government and reforming systems in make it easier for people to make the right ethical choices. And it would itself be ethical to do so. After all, the last line in the most famous prayer in the Christian world begins with the words "And lead us not into temptation." A system that reduces temptation and engages conscience will reduce corruption.

The fifth factor in our favour as we fight against corruption may be decisive. Some months ago, I spoke of people whose countries were in economic crisis, raising calls for democracy and reform. But today, in the information age, reform is not enough unless it is matched with an effort to inform. First inform; then reform. Then, information may be decisive, because information is the natural enemy of corruption. Corruption thrives on ignorance, not information. It needs secrecy, not transparency. It seeks darkness, not light.

It has always been a legendary trait of organised crime that members of the syndicate would not talk; because talk would kill them. It is the same today with corruption. The free flow of information is the very thing corruption cannot abide, and yet the free flow of information is the signature trait of the age in which we live.

There have never been more channels of information, more sources of information, more storehouses of information. Information has never moved more quickly, to more people, with more purpose. Information has never been more prized, more purchased, or more essential to the wealth and success of society. It is the central medium of exchange.

At a time when society's central industry is the effort to satisfy people's need to know — it bodes ill for corruption that it lives off the need that no one know — that no one talk; and no one take action.

In fact, the recent examples of

'[For] countries... in economic crisis... reform is not enough unless it is matched with an effort to inform. First inform; then reform... information is the natural enemy of corruption. Corruption thrives on ignorance, not information. It needs secrecy, not transparency'

they will reform the system.

Through a process called third-party procurement monitoring that brings openness, transparency and information to the process, a private firm has helped the Ministry of Health of Guatemala reduce its corruption, gain savings of 43 per cent, and lower the price of its medicine by an average of 20 per cent. The same approach has shown results in countries as diverse as Kenya, the Dominican Republic, Argentina, and Colombia.

In several countries from Latin America to Eastern Europe and to the former Soviet Union, the World Bank — in collaboration with local institutions and civil society and international NGOs such as Transparency International — has collaborated with local governments to administer deeply detailed surveys on corruption to citizens, companies, and public officials in willing countries. Survey results typically reveal that public officials are highly cooperative survey respondents. They are very candid. They say they are themselves sick and tired of the corruption in their midst, and they are prepared to join coalitions to address the problem.

Businesses — far from accepting corruption as a cost of business — say they would pay 15-20 per cent more in taxes just to be free of the costs and hassles of corruption. As an example of the depth of corruption exposed by these diagnostic surveys, respondents from one country say it takes an average bribe of one thousand dollars to get a phone line. In another country, 60 per cent of the customs officials surveyed say they purchased their positions. You know that if they pay for their position, they will make their position pay off.

Following this in-depth diagnostic survey approach, all this data is released in a major public meeting in the country, with the media present. Leaders from government, business, and civil society then come to consensus on an action plan targeting the worst areas of corruption.

In Bolivia, Vice President Quiroga — after receiving and reviewing the survey results on official corruption in his country — delivered a

Power Point presentation before a national television audience identifying his 20 priorities over the next twelve months, and promised to follow up with further diagnostic survey work to monitor progress. This is just a beginning, of course. But it is an auspicious beginning.

In Albania, the prime minister was presiding at a diagnostic survey workshop last summer. He said "we can sit here past midnight and argue about a particular num-

ber or claim that a point has been overstated. That would be a waste. We have the data. We know what needs to be done. Let's begin." The next day, all the nation's newspapers carried Page One coverage of the results, with charts, graphs, and texts of survey results. Pushed off the front page that day — amazingly — was coverage of the prior day's crucial World Cup Soccer match between Albania's neighbours Romania and Croatia. People were more eager to see the survey information.

As a result of the excellent early results of this approach, and its success in engaging the energy of civil society, public officials, business people and individual citizens, I am pleased to announce today that the United States plans to work closely with the World Bank, local organisations, civil society and other international donors and NGOs to support willing countries in the use of these diagnostic surveys. When a country shows it is committed to the rigorous self-analysis necessary to launch a process of reform, we would be honoured to work with its civil society, companies, public officials, and citizens, to assist and encourage those efforts.

Of course, this initiative will be part of our administration-wide effort to mount a comprehensive, global response to the problem of corruption. Over the next two years we in the U.S. will work diligently with our friends and partners to (1) urge other key exporting nations to ratify and implement the OECD Convention; (2) to develop and implement global standards on transparency and accountability; (3) to conclude an agreement on Transparency in Government Procurement at the WTO ministerial in Seattle later this year; and (4) to pursue region-wide anti-corruption initiatives in the Americas, Asia-Pacific, Africa, and Europe — including urging ratification in the United States of the Inter-American Convention and seeking full implementation by all signatories.

We also look forward to working with all of you to maximise the advantages offered by what is called "mutual evaluation" — an approach where different countries conduct on-site mutual evaluations to tighten the accountability and rigour attached to anti-corruption conventions.

I would suggest, to build on the effectiveness of the mutual evaluations, that we discuss during this conference ways to supplement the mutual evaluation process with an Internet-based reporting device. In addition, the mutual evaluation teams might consider offering individual citizens and business people of the host country the opportunity to serve as evaluators. That would increase interest and awareness of the evaluation efforts and help contribute to their success.

The information age — with its advances in science and technology, new medical discoveries, mobile capital, expanded trade, and instantaneous communication — offers great opportunities coupled with great risks — and thus brings us to the open moment I mentioned earlier. We have a rare chance to use the tools of our newest technology in the service of our oldest values — helping us build faith in democracy, improve competitiveness, expand prosperity, expose corruption, and strengthen the system of self-government that is history's greatest guardian of freedom, equality, opportunity and human dignity.

If we do not fight for these values, the information age will simply create more efficient channels for the spread of mischief, mayhem and corruption. Make no mistake: This is a fight for our values. We know that as bribery rises, civil liberties fall. We know that as bribery rises, the rule of law falls. We know that as bribery rises, the professionalism of our civil service falls. We are not engaged in an academic debate. We are locked in a battle over the kind of world we will leave our children.

Together, for the sake of a greater global community, let us set new standards of humanity and new heights of prosperity — by matching wisdom with intelligence, humanity with humour, compassion with common sense, and realism with idealism — by instituting the open, honest, transparent, democratic systems that will help make public servants accountable for the best and most honest use of public money, and urge them to earn and safeguard every citizen's deposit of public trust.



'If you have a monopoly, and you have discretion in applying the rules, and no one is holding you accountable, you are far likelier to become corrupt'

Chilean poet Pablo Neruda talked of "the most ancient rites of our conscience." The poet Dante once wrote: "A light is given you to know good and evil." Immanuel Kant once wrote: "Conscience is not a thing to be acquired... but every man, as a moral being, has it originally within him."

More recently, Harvard Professor Jerome Kagan published a book contending that there is a universal desire to see oneself as ethically

successful efforts against corruption come from the power of information, and the action of civil society.

In Argentina recently, newspapers reported huge discrepancies in public school lunch costs between the capital of Buenos Aires and a more rural school district. Within two weeks, there were personnel changes in Buenos Aires and lunch costs dropped by half. If we inform civil society, civil soci-

Clinton calls for global trade rules to support environment

GENEVA (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton called Monday for global trade rules to support environmental protection.

"We should be levelling environmental protections up, not down," Clinton said in a message at the opening of a conference on trade and the environment at World Trade Organisation (WTO) headquarters in Geneva.

The two-day seminar has brought together 824 participants, including senior government officials from rich and poor countries, academics and 130 non-governmental organisations.

Each constituency is hoping to voice its concerns and priorities on the environment and how it is affected by trade agreements.

"International trade rules have increasingly important implications for the environment. They must be supportive of national policies that provide for high levels of environmental protection and effective enforcement," Clinton said, in his message read by WTO Director General Renato Ruggiero.

Clinton recalled that sustainable development was an objective of the four-year-old WTO. Achieving this goal would require greater "inclusiveness and transparency in WTO pro-

ceedings to win the confidence of people around the world."

European Commission vice president, Sir Leon Brittan, also urged that sustainable development be placed at the heart of WTO decision making.

"We need to reconcile the competing demands of economic growth, environmental protection and social development," he said.

But he did not expect dramatic results from the seminar.

"We are in Geneva, not in Jericho, so don't expect the walls to come tumbling down," he told journalists.

The ecological community has criticised the WTO for ignoring environmental issues in its push for trade liberalisation, arguing that its projects also bear heavy social costs and can aggravate environmental problems.

Developing countries for their part fear that too much emphasis on environmental goals could end up as backdoor protectionism, essentially harming the chances of achieving greater market access to rich country markets.

"Our first priority is not to corrupt WTO rules," a delegate from the Philippines said.

"If you start to use the WTO to put in trade-restrictive policies, you're not

doing a favour to the environment because you are denying market access to developing countries," he added.

The U.S. delegation is specifically calling for "substantial" cuts in trade-distorting agricultural subsidies and subsidies that promote over-fishing.

Government subsidies were the prime culprits behind overcapacity of the global fishing fleet which was causing depletion of fish stocks in many regions, according to the United States.

A recent study by the World Bank estimates that about \$14 billion to \$20 billion (12.7-18.2 billion euros) of environmentally-harmful subsidies are being granted each year to the global fisheries sector — amounting to around one quarter of its direct sales revenues.

The European Union (EU) states that a gradual subsidy reduction could lead to "win-win" situations and increase opportunities for developing countries to exploit their comparative advantage in certain goods.

However, cutting subsidies "might need to be accompanied by appropriate flanking measures in order to avoid negative effects on the environment," the European Com-

mission said in a position paper issued for the conference.

Brussels favours so-called Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) to tackle particular problems.

The EU also supports labelling of products where worries exist about the methods used to produce goods which could have negative effects on the environment. But labelling schemes had to be compatible with WTO rules, Brittan stressed.

Clinton said he was confident that this week's discussions would contribute greatly to preparations for the WTO's third ministerial meeting to be held in Seattle the end of November.

On Wednesday, the WTO is chairing a separate two-day seminar on trade and development.

The Seattle meeting is expected to give birth to a new round of global trade liberalisation negotiations, which would be the ninth round since the establishment of a multilateral rules-based system in 1948.

While agriculture and services would be part of a new liberalisation push, the EU in particular is pushing for a much broader agenda to include new areas such as competition policy and reducing bureaucracy in trade transactions.

Senior U.S. official: Recent crises highlight role of social aspects of economic reform

PARIS (AFP) — Recent financial crises have highlighted the importance of institutional and social aspects of economic reform, U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers said here Sunday.

The received wisdom has been that governments must first address problems such as restoring macroeconomic stability and resolving debt problems before moving on to strengthening national institutions and addressing issues such as education, Summers said.

But recent events have shown that "that second generation of reform in many ways depends on the first generation," he told a seminar on the sidelines of the Inter American Development Bank annual meeting here.

The crises in Indonesia and Russia showed "that the capacity to govern wisely, the capacity to maintain stable policies is itself dependent on a satisfactory degree of institutional development."

The United States has

enjoyed strong economic growth for several years, but a child born in New York has less chance of surviving to its fifth birthday and a lower chance of learning to read than a child born in Shanghai, Summers said.

The need for "institutions, integration, inclusion is as profound for the United States as it is for any other country and it is something that we in the United States perhaps too often forget."

He said that it was vital to include civil society, particularly workers, in the bene-

fits and understanding of the globalisation of the economy.

People must be convinced that "globalisation does not mean local disintegration," Summers added.

In a world where some single private institutions handled more money than all the international financial institutions put together, it was a "real challenge" to draw up a system of global regulations that "realises all the potential benefits of globalisation and integration," he said.

Iraq aims to develop oil industry

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq's oil ministry is to begin soon a series of measures to boost its oil sector, battered by decades of war and sanctions, an Iraqi official told AFP Monday.

The Iraqi cabinet, headed by President Saddam Hussein, Sunday approved ministry plans to expand exploration and refining activities, the official said, asking not to be named.

"The ministry proposed projects on oil-digging and oil-processing. It stated what it needs in terms of investments, essential equipment and machinery to increase oil exporting efforts," the official INA news agency said Sunday.

"The ministry explained how carrying out these projects can help expand the base of the industrial sector through building and further developing advanced mechanical and electrical industries," INA added, without elaborating.

Despite being under U.N. sanctions, Iraq is allowed to sell limited quantities of crude in return for basic products and some spare parts under a U.N.-monitored oil-for-food programme.

But it has had problems reaching the programme's ceiling, currently set at \$5.2 billion worth over six months, because of the poor condition of its oil infrastructure and low oil prices.

Iraq is in talks with foreign firms to boost total capacity to six million barrels per day (bpd) and for the development of oil deposits totalling 30 to 40 billion barrels.

Iraq has said it will need \$30 billion to develop its oil sector, half of which is for new fields.

Exchange Rates Monday, 15-03-99											
CURRENCY	JORDAN D.	SAUDI R.	U.S. D.	BAHRAIN D.	OMAN R.	QATAR R.	KUWAIT D.	EGYPT P.	US D.	ACCESS 4/10/99	
JORDAN D.	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8777	1.8387	0.1948	2.5102	0.2077	0.7080		
SAUDI R.	5.2973	1.0000	1.0208	8.9470	9.7403	1.0301	12.2365	1.1205	3.7505		
U.S. D.	0.5183	0.9786	1.0000	9.7441	9.5416	1.0091	11.0869	1.0781	3.5740		
BAHRAIN D.	0.0975	0.1025	0.1026	1.0000	0.9792	1.0336	1.2302	0.1106	0.3771		
OMAN R.	0.5439	0.1027	0.1048	1.0212	1.0000	1.0506	1.2553	0.1130	0.3851		
QATAR R.	5.1427	0.9708	0.9910	8.9565	9.4559	1.0000	11.8733	1.0884	3.6410		
KUWAIT D.	0.4329	0.0817	0.0834	0.8128	0.7960	0.8442	1.0000	0.0889	0.3065		
EGYPT P.	4.8135	0.9087	0.9278	39.0621	38.8508	0.0382	11.1191	1.0000	3.4080		
LIBANON L.	21.2268	4.0075	4.0000	38.0621	38.0000	0.1250	49.0378	4.4102	15.0000		
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2668	0.2722	2.8922	2.5971	0.2746	3.2626	0.2834	1.0000		
LIBANON L.	0.8888	0.1640	0.1674	1.6313	1.5974	0.1689	2.0088	0.1805	0.6151		
GERMAN MARK	2.5235	0.4764	0.4803	4.7386	4.6402	0.4907	5.8294	0.5243	1.7887		
SWITZERLAND F.	2.0661	0.3600	0.3691	3.8706	3.7990	0.4018	4.7728	0.4292	1.4828		
FRANCE FRANC	8.4831	1.5976	1.6308	15.8915	15.5614	1.6457	18.5494	1.7582	5.9919		
JAPAN YEN	1.6708	0.3163	0.3220	3.1375	3.0723	0.3249	3.8597	0.3471	1.1830		
HOLLAND G.	2.8432	0.5387	0.5479	5.3388	5.2279	0.5529	6.5677	0.5907	2.0130		
SWEDEN KRONA	11.4803	2.1673	2.2124	21.5581	21.1102	2.2326	26.5204	2.3881	8.1285		
ITALY LIRA	24.5823	4.7160	4.8142	46.9102	45.8398	4.8579	57.7080	5.1500	17.8875		
BELGIUM FRANC	52.0494	9.8256	10.0002	97.7350	95.7045	10.1211	120.2316	10.5131	35.8510		
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	2.2282	0.4206	0.4284	4.1838	4.0970	0.4333	5.1469	0.4629	1.5175		
SPAIN PESS.	4.1486	0.7828	0.7951	7.7682	7.6248	0.8083	9.5785	0.8614	2.9458		
CYPRUS POUND	5.1265	1.2113	1.2442	1.4061	1.3753	0.1455	1.7285	0.1555	0.5298		
AUSTRIA S.	17.7530	3.3513	3.4211	33.3364	32.6426	3.4521	41.0065	3.6881	12.5691		
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1573	0.4073	0.4157	4.0508	3.9668	0.4195	4.9934	0.4482	1.5274		
EURO	1.2900	0.2435	0.2488	2.4223	2.3720	0.2509	2.9799	0.2680	0.9133		

CURRENCY	US DOLLAR	GERMAN MARK	SWITZERLAND FRANC	FRANCE FRANC	JAPAN YEN	HOLLAND DOLLAR	ITALY LIRA	EURO
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.6256	0.5567	0.8638	0.1889	0.8453	0.4968	0.5537
GERMAN MARK	0.6151	1.0000	0.3443	0.4205	0.1027	0.5198	0.3056	0.3775
SWITZERLAND FRANC	1.7887	2.9048	1.0000	1.2314	0.2962	1.5103	0.8876	1.0151
FRANCE FRANC	1.4828	2.3782	0.8187	1.0000	0.2441	1.2305	0.7372	0.8618
JAPAN YEN	5.9919	9.7416	3.3536	4.0962	1.0000	5.0650	2.9786	3.3755
HOLLAND DOLLAR	118.2000	192.3321	68.2115	80.8729	19.7430	1.0000	58.7880	66.8338
ITALY LIRA	2.0130	3.2727	1.2767	1.5761	0.3380	1.7016	1.0000	1.1380
EURO	0.9133	1.4849	0.5112	0.8244	0.1824	0.7720	0.4537	1.0000

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STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST	CHANGE	PRECIOUS METALS	METAL	ASK	BID
FRANKFURT	DAX	5008.18	4734.41	253.73	GOLD	381.20	381.10	
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	10836.86	10801.78	35.08	SILVER	5.20	5.20	
LONDON	FTSE 100	5832.90	5832.90	-0.00	PLATINUM	385.00	387.00	
NEW YORK	DOW JONES	5877.44	5877.44	-0.00				
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	811.54	811.57	-0.03				
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	721.21	721.65	-0.44				
NEW YORK	S&P 500	1234.50	1237.58	-3.08				
TOKYO	NIKKEI-225	15779.80	15488.66	290.74				
PARIS	CAC 40	4175.03	4184.38	-9.35				

Private sector to offset state drag in China

HONG KONG (R) — Constitutional changes elevating the status of private enterprise in China will have long-term implications for the nation's slowing economy, economists said Monday.

"From here on, the private sector shall be regarded by everyone including the government as just as important as the state sector," said Guonan Ma, economist at Salomon Smith Barney.

China's parliament Monday gave a boost to the private sector by approving amendments giving it a special place in the Communist constitution, recognising its role in creating jobs and underpinning the slowing economy.

Despite decades of official mistrust, private enterprise already accounts for one-third of industrial output in China, with about 29 million private firms employing 68 million people.

Easier access to capital markets and bank lending will spur growth in an efficient and important economic sector, helping to offset the drag of

state-owned enterprises, economists said.

"China still wants high growth, and I think it's pretty clear the state sector isn't going to help out," said Gilbert Choy, economist at Dresner Kleinwort Benson. "But the private sector is growing fast. It's efficient, it's employing a lot of people, and it's contributing to a significant part of the economy. It's hard to ignore," he stressed.

China's economy grew 7.3 per cent last year thanks to heavy state investment, but export growth is slowing and domestic demand remains weak.

Beijing has pledged to pump money into the public sector this year to achieve its growth target of an annualised seven per cent, but concern about high unemployment is rising as the state sector continues to lag.

The constitutional stamp of approval will remove ideological shackles that have inhibited private enterprise in China, allowing for the creation of new jobs to absorb workers laid off

by the state enterprises, economists said.

Elevating the constitution's description of the private sector to an "important component" instead of just a "complement" to the socialist economy will allow the gradual removal of discriminatory legislation, Ma said.

Such a change would have been unthinkable under Mao Zedong, and highly controversial even 10 years ago, the economists said.

But it reflects China's pragmatic response to the severity of the Asian financial crisis, which has hindered state-owned enterprise reform and delayed massive bank restructuring, they added.

"The private sector will be an important driver of economic growth," said Qiu Liao, economist at Standard Chartered Bank.

"In the coming years, including this year, they will pay more attention to helping the private sector," he indicated.

The constitutional amendments will pave the way for leg-

islative changes removing discriminatory hurdles and allowing the expansion of entrepreneurial activity in China.

But the short-term effects will be limited, economists said.

Chinese banks are already highly risk averse and a sudden rush of bank lending is considered unlikely, despite assurances of easier credit for private enterprise from Central Bank Governor Dai Xianglong last week.

Instead, private enterprises are expected to seek local and overseas listings to raise money through equity financings.

"The most obvious consequence will be the private sector gaining access to capital markets and stock markets," said Choy.

He expects to see a number of private businesses list on stock exchanges in Shenzhen and Shanghai, and said some could even set their sights on Hong Kong or other Asian exchanges.

"How much money can be raised in which markets will determine where they'll go," Choy said.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Crimson and scarlet
- University of Maine

McDonald's fast food outlets do roaring trade in Middle East

DUBAI (AFP) — Middle Easterners have an enormous appetite for fast food, pushing up sales of the U.S. McDonald's chain by 42 per cent in 1998 from the previous year, the company announced Sunday.

The statistics are the best since McDonald's opened its first restaurant in the region in Saudi Arabia in 1993, group vice president, Tim Fenton, said in a statement without providing the sales figures for the region.

The company intends to open more than 40 new outlets in the Middle East in 1999, bringing the regional total to 122. McDonald's regional vice president, Tim Fenton, said in a statement issued by the group.

It is already present in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, in addition to Saudi Arabia.

The meat used in the restaurants in the Middle East is halal — slaughtered in the way acceptable to Muslims.

The chain serves more than 40 million people worldwide every day, in its 24,800 restaurants in 115 countries. Its total sales around the world came to nearly \$36 billion in 1998.

U.S. firm sees global sales of personal computers rising

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP) — Worldwide personal computer (PC) shipments will rise 14.1 per cent this year compared to 15 per cent in 1998, the U.S. market research firm International Data Corp (IDC) has said.

However, IDC said first-quarter shipments would fall 14.7 per cent from fourth-quarter levels.

IDC previously had forecast that PC unit shipments would rise by an annual rate of only 12.8 per cent in 1999.

The company said it had also factored in "signs of ongoing price pressure" into its forecast of a 4.8 per cent increase in industry revenues to \$178.4 billion.

"This low-growth scenario illustrates the continued downward migration of consumer and commercial desktop as well as portable PC prices," said Bruce Stephen, vice president of worldwide PC research at IDC.

"It also explains why PC vendors are moving at a frenetic pace to diversify their business models and revenue sources," Stephen added.

IDC said western Europe will experience a 15.1 per cent increase in first-quarter PC shipments from the year-earlier period.

The U.S. market's unit shipments are projected to rise 19.3 per cent in the first quarter from the year-earlier period.

PC unit shipments in the Asia-Pacific region excluding Japan are expected to rise 14 per cent from the year-earlier period.

IDC said growing shipments in western Europe will be fuelled by continued consumer purchases in the low-cost PC market segment, portable PC purchases and a strengthening economy in Germany.

Compaq Computers, Gateway 2000 and possibly Apple Computer will benefit from growth in consumer PC sales in the United States, western Europe and the Asia-Pacific region, and will likely gain market share, the IDC said.

Mercedes targets new young Egyptian professionals with C-180

CAIRO (AFP) — The Egyptian-German venture that assembles Mercedes cars unveiled plans to capture a growing market of young Egyptian professionals with the launch here Sunday of its C-180 model.

Sami Saad, chairman of the Egyptian-German Automotive (EGA) which assembled the model, said after "the Class E, we are trying to move closer to the middle class with a pricetag of 168,000 pounds (\$48,300)."

The price of the E-200, also assembled in Egypt, is 298,000 Egyptian pounds (\$85,600).

"The new C-180 is aimed at doctors, lawyers, architects, and other young executives wanting the combined advantages of elegance and comfort in a car they will keep for more than 10 years," Saad told a press conference in Cairo.

He said he wanted to take advantage of changes in Egyptian society which over the last 40 years has moved from "rigid socialism to rampant capitalism to enter the current phase of stabilisation," which began in 1991.

"With higher income, feelings toward a luxury product are no longer those of hope of being able to buy one soon," he said.

The company expects to sell between 120 and 180 cars of this model every month out of the 3,000 leaving the shop floor each year at the factory in the Sixth of October City south of Cairo.

"Cars with more than two-litre engines account for five per cent of the market of cars estimated at around 80,000 vehicles," Saad said. "Mercedes has more than 50 per cent of the market share of around 4,000 cars."

The private Egyptian firm NATCO holds 74 per cent of EGA, a joint venture with DaimlerChryslerBenz, which holds the remaining 26 per cent. Production of the Mercedes E-200 began here in November 1997.

"With the Class E, we have reached our goal. All our production has been sold and this applies also for our production to come," Saad said.

Before building the assembly plant in Egypt, NATCO sold 1,000 imported Mercedes every year, including 700 of the E-200 models, but sales were undermined by taxes of up to 200 per cent on large-cylinder imported cars.

Today, the company hopes to sell 5,000 cars of the two models assembled in Egypt.

But the company is unable to produce at competitive prices for export.

"We have no chance to export because the cost of products made locally is almost equal to the price of the same exported product," he complained.

He expressed the hope for "an increase in consumption in the Egyptian market, a decrease in the price of products made locally as well as a cut in taxes from the Egyptian government which sees the auto industry as a way to boost medium-technology industry."

Nearly 40 per cent of the C-180 is made in Egypt, including the seats, the air conditioning, the radio and battery, while the rest is imported from the mother company's factory in Germany.

The vehicles have been modified to adapt them to conditions in Egypt.

Compared to the same model in Europe, he said, "the body of the car is raised slightly higher and an extremely robust system of shock absorbers has been adopted" so that they can withstand the potholes on Egyptian roads.

A.S.E TRADE Monday, 15-03-99			
ACCESS 4646868			
Company	Open	Close	Change
BANKS			
ARAB BK	222.000	221.000	-0.45%
NTL BK	1.430	1.420	-0.70%
BL OF JORDAN	1.320	1.380	+2.27%
THE HOUSING BK	2.830	2.810	-0.71%
JO. KUWAIT BK	1.550	1.550	0.00%
JO. GULF BK	0.850	0.860	+1.18%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.870	1.870	0.00%
JO. INVS.FIN. BK	1.330	1.300	-2.26%
BEIT EL MAL	0.840	0.860	+2.38%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.820	0.820	0.00%
BANKS INDEX	288.680	POINT =	-0.49%
INSURANCE			
JO. FRENCH INS	2.700	2.670	-1.11%
INSURANCE INDEX	125.750	POINT =	-0.14%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.860	1.850	-0.60%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.900	0.890	-1.11%
JO. INTL. TRADING CENT	0.250	0.240	-4.00%
AL-KARAT	7.020	7.050	+0.43%
AD-ZARGA FOR EDU	1.030	0.980	-4.85%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.110	1.080	-2.70%
SERVICES INDEX	113.140	POINT =	-0.30%
INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	3.720	3.680	-1.06%
PHOSPHATE	2.280	2.250	-1.32%
ARAB POTASH	4.210	4.200	-0.24%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.830	10.800	-0.28%
JO. TANNING	5.400	5.500	+1.85%
THE IND. COMM. & AGRIC	1.060	1.020	-3.77%
WORSTED MILLS	5.450	5.450	0.00%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	3.030	3.000	-0.99%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.520	1.500	-1.32%
JO. PIPES	1.090	1.080	-0.91%
DAR AL DAWA	6.110	6.080	-0.50%
MODEL EAST COMPLEX	0.580	0.550	-5.17%
JO. STEEL	1.000	1.000	0.00%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.650	1.600	-3.03%
CHLORINE	1.200	1.190	-0.83%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.400	0.400	0.00%
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0.270	0.260	-3.70%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0.960	0.930	-3.13%
NTL CABLE	0.490	0.490	0.00%
SULPHO - CHEMICALS	0.410	0.410	0.00%
KAWTHER	0.430	0.450	+4.65%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.610	0.600	-1.64%
NTL ALUMINIUM	0.820	0.800	-2.44%
INDUSTRY INDEX	95.770	POINT =	-0.81%
PARALLEL			
EXPORT BK 75Z	0.940	0.950	+1.06%
JO. INTL. INS	0.880	0.710	-19.55%
ARAB FINANCIAL INVS	0.520	0.520	0.00%
AL - EKBAL	0.380	0.370	-2.63%
ADVANCED PHAR	0.830	0.830	0.00%
AL - SHARG	1.090	1.090	0.00%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0.480	0.470	-2.08%
AL DAWLAH	0.710	0.700	-1.41%
ARAB INVESTORS	1.090	1.080	-0.92%
JO. INTL. TRADE	0.180	0.180	0.00%
OPTICAL & AUDIAL	0.340	0.330	-2.94%
READY MIX CONCRETE	0.820	0.820	0.00%
NABICO	0.610	0.610	0.00%
UNIVERSAL PHAR	0.580	0.580	0.00%
AL-KAZI	0.490	0.490	0.00%
UNITED ENG. IND	0.210	0.210	0.00%
INTL CERAMIC	0.380	0.380	0.00%
ARAB JO. INVS	1.530	1.500	-1.96%
GRAND INDEX	182.16	POINT =	-0.56%

Bankboston, Fleet strike \$16 billion merger deal

BOSTON (R) — Bankboston Corp. and Fleet Financial Group said Sunday they would merge in a \$16 billion stock deal that would create a regional powerhouse in the consolidating U.S. banking industry.

The deal, which would form the nation's eighth-largest bank, follows a wave of blockbuster bank mergers that rocked the U.S. financial sector last year.

Under terms of the deal, Bankboston shareholders would get 1,184 shares of Fleet for each Bankboston share they own. The calculation is based on the closing prices of both banks' stocks on Friday and values Bankboston's stock at \$53 a share.

Bankboston closed on Friday at \$47 a share and Fleet closed at \$44.81.

The merger would create an institution with \$180 billion in assets and 20 million customers but also would result in the loss of more than 4,500 jobs. The banks, whose operations are heavily concentrated in New England, have agreed to divest themselves of some \$13 billion in deposits to appease U.S. regulators.

"This transaction is driven by and meets our strategic objectives of achieving the requisite size and scope to compete effectively in our industry while improving and diversifying the range of business lines we have to serve our customers," Fleet's chairman and chief executive, Terence Murray, said.

Bankboston's chairman and chief executive, Chad Gifford, said Bankboston, which he called the oldest U.S. commercial bank, had decided to join with Fleet to become a Boston-based financial-service powerhouse and global leader in the new Millennium.

"These banks should definitely do much better on a combined basis than stand alone," Diana Yates, an analyst at A.G. Edwards, said. "They don't have to compete with each other."

An active acquirer, Fleet brings to the table large discount brokerage Quick & Reilly, an array of fee-based products, a strong and large retail franchise, and an innovative distribution network, analysts said.

Bankboston adds a wide retail branch network in New England, a strong corporate lending arm, its BancBoston Robertson Stephens Investment Bank, and long-standing operations in Argentina and Brazil.

Because they work out of the same market, they can also reap cost savings by cutting more branches and eliminating duplicate systems and staff, analysts said.

"There is the obvious opportunity of getting the stronger Bankboston branch system tied in with Fleet, and taking advantage of a lot of fleet products," Lawrence Cohn, an analyst at Ryan, Beck & Co., said.

To clear any regulatory hurdles, Fleet and Bankboston said, they will sell some \$13 billion in deposits to other banks and divest themselves of a "significant" number of branches, customers and ATMs.

"We have already had talks with the Justice Department, and we will divest about \$13 billion in deposits," Bankboston's chief financial officer, Susannah Swihart, told Reuters in an interview about an hour after the deal was announced.

The newly merged company, to be known as Fleet Boston Corp., would become the No. 3 U.S. commercial lender, with a strong presence in debt and equity underwriting, cash management and foreign trade services, the banks said.

Last year several leading U.S. banks forged megamergers in the face of industry overcapacity, hoping they could cut costs and expand revenues, assets and geographic reach as well as tap new distribution channels, industry analysts said.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, MARCH 16, 1999
By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You don't spend much time daydreaming. You're more of an action of person. So today, you might be surprised to notice yourself gazing off into space. Try not to let it worry you. You could actually come up with some pretty good ideas, and knowing you, you're liable to make them happen. Better write them down.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You were right to wait. This is a much better day for you to take action. You won't have to do it all alone, either. You've got some very good friends who would like to help. Let them know how they can do that.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You've got a wild imagination, but you kind of like things to make sense. If they don't, you get a bit worried. You're not really one to take a leap of faith, but today, you could get away with it. Give it a try.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) This would be an excellent day to start on your world cruise. Travel by water looks very good for you right now. If you can't actually get away, at least put a down payment on a dream. That's a first step to turning fantasy into reality.

LEO: (July 23 to August 21) If you're going to speculate today, take care. Real estate looks like a good investment, but romance may not be quite yet. You and your sweetheart need to work out a few details before you make a big commitment, like where to buy the real estate, for example.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Look carefully before you leap today. Things may not be as they appear. Well, they are initially, but then they change, and that's what you have to be watching for. Today, it might seem like life's a roller coaster, but that's just part of the fun.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) You thought you had things figured out, but today you're in for a big surprise. You may have the right answer, but it's to the wrong question. In order to avoid exasperating embarrassment, listen carefully to the instructions and the advice of co-workers. The test today is on how much you can learn, not on how much you already know.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) You seem to be having a conflict today between love and money. If so, stop worrying about it right now. It's only a temporary condition. Besides, you know you should pick love over money any time. If you've got plenty of love, who needs money? And anyway, you'll think of more ways to make money. You always do.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) A household project definitely needs your attention. You've put it off long enough. A change for the worse is happening almost by itself. Change for the better is going to require participation on your part, and possibly the expenditure of some money, too. Better get at it.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) You're sharp as a tack today, and twice as cute. Not only are you intelligent, you're also intuitive. In fact, your intuition may be working better than the rational side of your brain right now. Pay attention to what it's telling you. It could have something to do with making a connection with a friend. If so, don't hesitate any longer.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) Money is one of your major themes today. Looks like you could find a way to get more of it into your pocket. Some of it will come from the generosity of an older person, and some might come from your own creativity. Better get some patents on those good ideas of yours, too, before somebody else walks off with them.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) The sun and moon are both in your sign today, which gives you all sorts of magical powers. Your intuition should be excellent, but a little one-sided. Be careful you don't imagine something that isn't really there. And focus only on good things, just in case you accidentally materialise something.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

EU set to fund development projects in Syria

DAMASCUS (AFP) — The European Union (EU) is to sign a cooperation agreement with Syria soon on projects worth around \$40 million, a visiting European member of parliament said Monday.

The projects cover telecommunications, forestry, tourism, water and modernisation of municipal administrations, said Austrian Hannes Swoboda who is heading a European parliamentary delegation visit. Swoboda said another funding for another three projects for electricity, a business school and support for the finance ministry together worth around \$39 million was also in the pipeline.

The delegation's visit comes ahead of negotiations in Brussels this week on a Syria-EU association agreement, which Swoboda said meant working with Syria on economic reforms and stronger economic ties with Europe.

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Philippoussis subdues new No. 1 Moya

INDIAN WELLS (AFP) — Mark Philippoussis captured his biggest title to date Sunday, less than a year after the dejected youngster was thinking about taking a break from his fledgling career.

The Australian defeated new World No. 1 Carlos Moya 5-7, 6-4, 6-4, 4-6, 6-2 to win the \$2.45 million Champions Cup, the first of the year's prestigious Super Nine events. Philippoussis, at 22 the same age as Moya, boosted his own ranking to a career-high 11th in the world.

"A lot of people mature quicker than others," said Philippoussis, who captured his second ATP Tour title of the year. "I'm just a slow maturer. I love having fun. I'm a big kid."

"I just had a lot of other things on my mind," he said of a rise up the rankings that has been a little slower than many expected.

"I've been working really hard the last few months," he added. "I have been enjoying myself, working extremely hard. I've been concentrating on the court, been fighting. Enjoying the challenge. I have to say."

Philippoussis was accompanied in Indian Wells by his coaches Gavin Hopper and former Wimbledon champion Pat Cash.

"It's just great having Gavin and Pat with me," he said. "They understand me as a person more than just as a pupil. They're more good friends. That's very important."

Under Cash's influence, Philippoussis said, he has improved his all-court game.

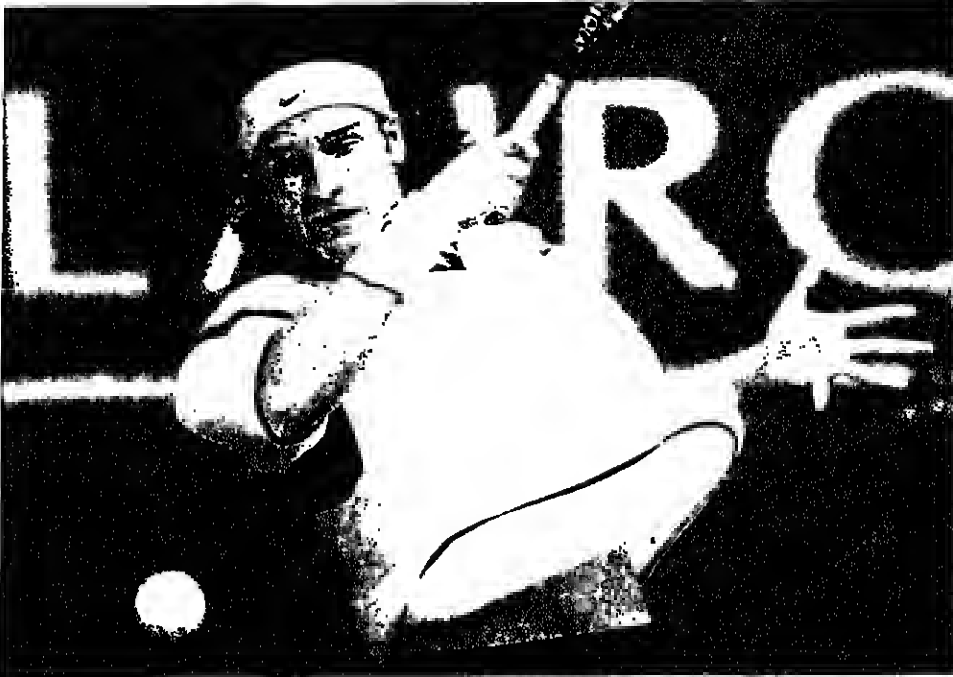
"I've built up confidence from serve and volleying, chip-and-charge," Philippoussis said. "If I'm not winning the points from the back, if I have to come to the net, I feel confident enough to do that."

Philippoussis was playing in his first Super Nine final, but his renewed commitment began to reap rewards as early as last September, when he finished runner-up at the U.S. Open.

It's a far cry from his feelings around the time of Wimbledon last year, when he was so frustrated he felt



Mark Philippoussis of Australia hits a backhand against Carlos Moya of Spain during final play at the Champions Cup in Indian Wells, California (AFP photo)



Carlos Moya from Spain hits a forehand against Mark Philippoussis of Australia during the final of the Champions Cup in Indian Wells, California (AFP photo)

like leaving the game for a while.

"I was in a bit of a slump in my career," he said. "I rang up my father and said I wanted to book a flight to go to Florida. I lost a lot of matches in a row. I was very depressed at that stage."

Philippoussis took his father's advice to just relax, reached the quarterfinals at Wimbledon, and buckled down.

He still had to face massive criticism for failing to represent Australia in the

Davis Cup.

"I've made some decisions in my life, right or wrong you learn from them," said Philippoussis, who returns to the Australians quad this year. "It's very important for any athlete in any sport to play for their country. It was very difficult for me, to see the other guys playing for the country. It didn't feel great for me to watch."

"That's the decision I made. Now I'm happy that I'm back on the team."

He has plenty to offer the

squad right now. His win-loss record of 14-2 gives him the best winning percentage on the ATP Tour.

"I think what's improved for me is my self-belief," he said. "There's always been talk about having the game, having the talent."

"It's just believing in myself and just giving myself the commitment to fight."

"Every tournament I go into, I feel there's no reason why I can't win it," he said. "That's what has changed."

Rodman takes leave of absence from Lakers

SACRAMENTO (R) — Basketball bad boy Dennis Rodman did not accompany the Los Angeles Lakers to their Sunday night game against the Sacramento Kings after taking an indefinite leave of absence from his own team.

The colourful, controversial Rodman, who has helped the Lakers to a 10-game winning streak, left the team for unspecified personal reasons, according to club spokesman John Black.

"Dennis asked for and has been granted a leave of absence," Black said. "That is all that has been determined at this time." Black said it was uncertain when Rodman would return to the team, which is beginning a six-game road trip.

The seven-time NBA rebounding champion signed with the Lakers Feb. 23, and has averaged 10.3 rebounds in nine games, all wins. But Lakers management knew it was a gamble taking on the off-suspended forward, who has a penchant for skipping practices and seems to live by rules all his own.

"I'm not going to freak out about it," new Lakers head coach Kurt Rambis told the Los Angeles Times. "It's just something we're going to have to deal with."

Rodman, a member of five NBA championship teams including the last three with the Chicago Bulls, is being paid of a pro-rated sum of \$468,000 by the Lakers after making \$9 million last season with Chicago. That figure will likely further decrease if the rainbow-haired, multi-tattooed Rodman continues to miss games.



Houston Rockets forward Scottie Pippen goes airborne while playing the Phoenix Suns in the first half at America West Arena in Phoenix. The Suns won 104-90 (AFP photo)

Kidd's triple-double leads Suns past Rockets

PHOENIX (R) — Jason Kidd recorded his fifth triple-double of the season as the Phoenix Suns halted a four-game home losing streak with a 104-90 victory over the Houston Rockets on Sunday.

Kidd compiled 26 points, 11 rebounds and 14 assists and sparked a decisive 18-6 run in the fourth quarter as the 11-10 Suns avoided falling under .500.

Kidd had 12 points, six rebounds and four assists in the fourth quarter alone as he notched his 24th career triple-double. "Jason Kidd again was unbelievable," Phoenix coach Danny Ainge said. "I hope everybody appreciates how special he is."

Tom Gugliotta added 17 points and 10 rebounds and Danoy Mannig, filling in for injured centre Luc Longley, chipped in 15 points for Phoenix.

Former Suo Charles Barkley had 21 points and 12 rebounds and Hakeem Olajuwon added 17 and 13 for the Rockets.

"We're better than that team," a disgusted Barkley said of his former club. "They're out on our level. It's frustrating to lose to a team like that."

In Sacramento, rookie Jason Williams scored 21 points and sank three big free throws down the stretch as the Kings posted a 105-101 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers, who saw their 10-game winning streak halted.

Chris Webber recorded his 20th double-double of the season with 19 points and 11 rebounds for the Kings, who snapped a three-game slide.

Sbaquille O'Neal scored 33 points and Kobe Bryant had 29 for the Lakers, who played without Dennis Rodman after the controversial rebounding king asked for a leave of

absence. "(Rodman's) not being here had nothing to do with whether we won or lost tonight," insisted rookie coach Kurt Rambis.

At Detroit, Steve Smith scored 22 points and Mookie Blaylock finally found his touch to the tune of 18 more as the Atlanta Hawks beat the Pistons 85-72.

It was Atlanta's first win in Detroit since 1994.

Blaylock, who had shot a woeful 29 per cent (22-of-76) from the field over his last seven games, drained 5-of-9 3-pointers, including three during a decisive fourth-quarter run.

Grant Hill had 27 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists for the Pistons, who were outscored 25-15 in the fourth quarter.

In Miami, Alonzo Mourning registered 25 points and 11 rebounds and Tim Hardaway had 20 and eight assists to lead the Heat to a 102-76 rout of the hapless New Jersey Nets.

Newly-acquired point guard Stephon Marbury scored 21 points in his Nets debut but could not keep the team from dropping its seventh in a row as New Jersey fell to 3-17, sparking rumours that coach John Calipari was about to lose his job.

At Indiana, Rik Smits scored 14 of his 28 points in the fourth quarter and Antonio Davis came up with a huge block with 10 seconds left as the Pacers erased a 10-point deficit to record a 99-96 win over the Boston Celtics.

Reggie Miller added 19 points for Indiana as Pacers coach Larry Bird improved to 5-0 against the team he led to three NBA championships in the 1980s.

In New York, Larry Johnson celebrated his 30th birthday by scoring 13 of his 19 points in the second

half as the Knicks bounced back from Friday's humiliating performance in Chicago with a 94-86 win over the Charlotte Hornets.

The Hornets closed to 80-79 with 5:56 left on a David Wesley 3-pointer. But Johnson scored five points and Laurrel Sprewell four in a 12-3 surge that pushed the New York lead to 92-82.

Allan Houston scored 20 points and Sprewell added 16 for the Knicks.

In Seattle, Gary Payton scored 28 points and handed out 11 assists as the Los Angeles Clippers started another losing streak in a 108-89 defeat by the Supersonics.

Payton connected on 12-of-19 shots and Olden Polye was a perfect 6-of-6 from the floor as the Sonics shot 57 per cent (42-of-74). Vin Baker scored 23 points and Dale Ellis added 17 for Seattle.

The Clippers, who won their first game Friday after 17 losses, made just 2-of-13 shots from the field in the fourth quarter and fell to 1-19 with their second straight loss.

In Washington, Mitch Richmond scored 23 points and Juwan Howard added 20, 11 rebounds and seven assists to lead the Wizards to a 98-86 victory over the Milwaukee Bucks.

Ray Allen scored 22 points and Glenn Robinson added 15 and nine rebounds for the Bucks.

Lewis-Holyfield rematch ordered within 6 months

NEW YORK (AFP) — The presidents of boxing's three primary governing bodies have ordered Lennox Lewis and Evander Holyfield to meet again within six months after they fought to a controversial draw.

Lewis landed nearly three times as many punches as Holyfield and kept the smaller fighter at bay most of the night, then listened with horror as the judges' results here Saturday produced a shocking draw in their world heavyweight title unification bout.

The rematch was ordered Sunday by International Boxing Federation president Bob Lee, World Boxing Association president Gilberto Mendoza and World Boxing Council president Jose Sulaiman.

Holyfield said he would not want to fight before September, when Lewis turns 34 and Holyfield will be a month shy of his 37th birthday.

The three sanctioning body leaders met after the travesty and decided to command a rematch, something promoter Don King was already hyping in hopes of another huge payoff like the one Saturday's fight produced.

"It's a shame there was so much controversy attached to this important fight," Lee said. "We

did what we thought was the most sensible thing."

It was the judge appointed to the bout by the IBF, Jean Williams of Atlantic City, New Jersey, whose 115-113 judgement for fellow American Holyfield was the controversial cause of the draw.

The outcome brought accusations of fight fixing by Lewis trainer Emanuel Steward, charges Williams denied.

"I don't care who the winner was," she said. "I scored by the blows that counted."

WBC-appointed Judge Larry O'Connor of Britain ruled the fight a 115-115 draw. He knew his decision would be unpopular back home.

"I know I will get some (complaints) but it's my decision to call the fight as I see it," he said. WBA-appointed Judge Stanley Christodoulou of South Africa.

"Many think it was a travesty of justice," he said. "I really believe Holyfield lost. But they might have the same conviction about their decisions."

With no other major heavyweights likely to command the pay-per-view numbers and global interest of Lewis and Holyfield, the rematch demand is not exactly a risk for the organisations

or promoters.

Lewis was paid \$10 million, half of what Holyfield received. But the contract terms for a rematch almost certainly will change. Lewis is likely to take public perception of his triumph and demand more money.

In addition, ring size terms were not what had been negotiated by the Lewis camp, which now has greater power in obtaining its desired terms on such issues for a rematch.

In short, negotiations will be even more contentious between pay-per-view boxing rivals HBO, which backs Holyfield through promoter Don King, and Showtime, the network that has a long-term deal with Lewis.

Not the least of those issues will be the location of the bout.

"Let's bring it to London," Lewis suggested after the fight, noting he had been willing to face Holyfield in an American venue.

It was only the fourth draw in heavyweight title history, the first since Michael Dokes and Mike Weaver stalemated for the WBA crown in 1983.

The most recent draw for an undisputed crown came in Paris in 1913 when Jack Johnson fought a 10-round draw with Jim Johnson.

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Cubans to play Orioles on May 3

BALTIMORE (AFP) — Cuba's national baseball team will complete a two-game series with the Baltimore Orioles here on May 3 after the Major League Baseball team plays in Havana on March 28.

Three days of talks in Havana with a U.S. delegation ended Saturday with the final plans set on plans for Baltimore's visit, the first by a major league club to Cuba in 40 years.

"I can't tell you how much I'm looking forward to it," major league commissioner Bud Selig said. "Baseball is the linchpin of the cultural exchange."

The Orioles' game against Cuba in Havana will be the first for a U.S. team in Cuba since the Los Angeles Dodgers and Cincinnati Reds met there in 1959.

While the Havana exhibition comes one week before

the Major League Baseball season begins, the rematch here comes a month into the season.

It will be played during what had been planned as a day off in a five-game homestand.

Talented Cuban defectors have made a huge contribution to the U.S. major leagues in recent years.

Orlando Hernandez of the New York Yankees, Rolando Arrojo of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, Livan Hernandez of the Florida Marlins and Edgar Renteria of the St. Louis Cardinals have all left their homes in Cuba for big-money deals in the major leagues.

Livan Hernandez was the Most Valuable Player of the 1997 World Series and his half-brother Orlando helped the Yankees win the 1998 title.



Ato Boldon of Trinidad and Tobago, takes in Stadium Australia in Sydney. Boldon hopes to win gold in the 100m and 200m at the 2000 Olympic Games, having become in 1998 the first athlete since Mike Marsh of the U.S. in 1992 to claim the year's fastest times for both sprints with 9.86sec and 19.88sec respectively (AFP photo)

Pacemen rate Sydney tops

SYDNEY (AFP) — Ato Boldon and Haile Gebrselassie, two of the quickest men in their line of business, say sprinters and distance runners will enjoy the athletics track at the Sydney Olympics next year.

"They seem to have found just the right compromise. Neither too hard, nor too soft," said the 25-year-old Boldon who ended last year as the world's fastest sprinter at both 100m and 200m.

His times last year of 9.86sec and 19.88 made the runner from Trinidad the first athlete since Mike Marsh of the United States in 1992 to claim top spots for both sprints.

Gebrselassie, whose feet were rubbed raw by the hard Atlanta track at the 1996 Olympics, has set his sights on a distance double in 2000.

"This surface seems just right," said the world and Olympic 10,000m champion who holds the world record for 5,000m and 10,000m, but who opted out of a 1996 Olympic double because of the Atlanta track.

Gebrselassie was on his way back home to Ethiopia after winning the 1,500m and 3,000m gold medals at the world indoor championships in Japan. Boldon had flown out especially from his Los Angeles home to announce a new shoe deal.

It was the first time in Australia for both men whose careers really took off at the 1992 world junior championships where Gebrselassie won the distance double and Boldon claimed the sprint double.

Gebrselassie has since gone on to win three 10,000m world championships and an Olympic title.

Boldon won the 200m at the 1997 world championships four days after pulling up injured in the 110m.

Both men face a stiff challenge at this year's world championships at Seville, Spain, in August.

Kenya's Daniel Komen, world record holder at 3,000m and two miles and who held Gebrselassie's 5,000m mark in 1997, will be gunning for the triple Ethiopian.

A fit-again Michael Johnson has vowed to reclaim his top spot at half a lap, although the American has said he will wait until June before deciding on whether he runs 200m or 400m at Seville.

"I'll enjoy the competition," said Boldon. "I used to be in awe of these guys. When I started I was running against Leroy Burrell and Carl Lewis. Now I feel like I've done a lot of what they've done and the mystique is gone."

He now feels his 200m is superior to his 100m although he admitted he could not match Johnson's stamina at the longer distance.

"With 200m you've always got to have something in reserve. You come off the bend with a lot of acceleration and you have to maintain your form correctly for the last 50 metres but like everybody else I'm just hanging on at the end," he said.

He has now run under 9.90sec for 100m more than anyone else but he believed his 100m would improve when his start returned to normal.

Boldon rated current world champion Maurice Green of the United States, ever-green Frankie Fredericks of Namibia, who has won silver medals at the last two Olympics, and 1996 Olympic champion and world record holder Donovan Bailey of Canada would be the major sprint rivals this year.

Boldon has suffered in recent years by starting and finishing the season well but having a mediocre mid-spell.

"I can't have a bad middle of the season this year because of Seville," he said. "So I won't be going out to run 9.8s so early."

He left Trinidad as a five-year-old for New York in 1988 where he has discovered while playing soccer and moved to California as a 16-year-old.

He now lives in Beverley Hills, sports a three-and-a-half carat diamond stud in his left ear, and his wedding to Cassandra last October was

shown on the Internet.

He claimed two bronzes in the 100m and 200m at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics and last June in Athens clocked 9.86sec for the 100m and 19.88sec for the 200m within an hour for history's fastest same-day double.

Gebrselassie might not run as fast over a short distance but he revealed sprint training figures high in his training. "I do a lot of 150m, 100m and 50m sprints," said the dead-end finisher in the business.

The Ethiopian believes only runners who live or train at altitude can win a gold medal in Sydney in 18 months.

"I know, myself, if I am too long in Europe I feel low. I need to get back to Addis," he said.

The Africans have turned distance races into sustained agony that demand brutal training.

"You've got to look at history and the winners in the distance events all come from or train at altitude," said the softly-spoken Ethiopian who said his speed training was done 2,600 metres up at his Addis Abebe home.

Endurance-training is done higher up the plateau.

"We just run until we're tired," said Gebrselassie who celebrated the birth of his first child, daughter Aden, last year.

He was enthusiastic about the Sydney Olympic set-up at Homebush Bay. "The quality of the amenities is fantastic. The stadium is really wonderful," he said.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Stade de France tries to lure PSG

PARIS (AFP) — Stade de France directors are proposing that French first division strugglers Paris St. Germain play their remaining matches in the World Cup stadium, the bi-weekly France Football magazine reported Monday. Stade de France director general Gaetan Desruelles said his group were ready to welcome PSG for the rest of the season in order to help them to remain in Division One. PSG are threatened with relegation after a dismal season. Their poor form comes despite a massive pre-season spending spree, bankrolled by the club's owners TV channel Canal Plus, that included the French record £11 million (\$16.5 million) purchase of Nigerian playmaker Jay Jay Okocha. Desruelles said that in order to avoid relegation the club needed strong public support and the 80,000 capacity stadium for matches against Olympic Marseille and Bordeaux matches would bring in the maximum number of fans.

Cubs pitcher to undergo MRI
MESA, Arizona (AFP) — The Chicago Cubs are taking no chances with Kerry Wood. The National League Rookie of the Year complained of discomfort in his right elbow after nailing his spring debut Saturday and the Cubs announced Sunday that he will travel to Chicago for an MRI and additional tests on Monday. "We're going to be cautious and send him back," Cubs general manager Ed Lynch told ESPN Radio 1000. "The kid's down in the dumps but we'll see. At this point it would be silly to speculate (on any injury)."

Lynch said the team plans to compare the MRI to those taken when Wood was healthy. A prognosis on when Wood will return to the mound will be made after the tests conducted by team physician Michael Schafer.

Potapenko signs long-term deal

INDIANAPOLIS (AFP) — Vitaly Potapenko has some work to do if he is going to earn the reported \$33 million, six-year contract extension he signed Sunday. The big man of the Boston Celtics, who was acquired Thursday in a trade with the Cleveland Cavaliers, had nine points, six rebounds and five turnovers and was dominated by opposing centre Rik Smits in Sunday's 99-96 loss at Indiana. Potapenko, a native of the Ukraine and a three-year National Basketball Association veteran, signed an undisclosed long-term deal Saturday, the deadline for 1996 first-round picks to sign an extension. The Boston Globe reported the terms at \$33 million over six years.

'Sydney 2000 breached IOC guidelines but generally clean'

SYDNEY (AFP) —

Sydney's bid for the 2000 Olympics technically breached IOC guidelines on several occasions, but compared to Salt Lake City was generally clean, an independent report showed Monday.

Breaches identified by former South Australian auditor-general Tom Sheridan included financial assistance to family members of an International Olympic Committee delegate and instances where employment was secured for IOC relatives.

Sheridan, asked to compile the report by Olympics Minister Michael Knight, also said many gifts to IOC members exceeded the \$200 limit while 12 visits by IOC officials to Australia were more than the permitted five days.

He said there were general matters involving IOC staff which "could meet the definition of misconduct asserted by the IOC ad hoc committee into the Salt Lake City bid." But he said there was nothing that warranted the findings being passed to police or the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

"The examination has not revealed a Salt Lake situation," he said, but was highly critical of the IOC guidelines which he described as unclear, ambiguous and inadequate. "They are unworkable and have fallen into disrepute, being almost completely ignored by candidate cities," he said in the report.

"In my opinion they are deficient. The IOC did not monitor the bidding cities adherence to the guidelines."

Overall, the bid company operated professionally and successfully "within that environment," he said.



Michael Knight, Australia's minister for the Olympics, plays down the findings of an independent investigation into Sydney's bid to host the 2000 Olympic Games, at the headquarters of the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG). The report found breaches of the IOC guidelines which Knight said bore no comparison with Salt Lake City's bid to host the 2002 Winter Olympics (AFP photo)

although a visit by senior Sydney official Rod McGeoch to Mongolia, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Mexico and India was questionable.

Sheridan scrutinised more than 3,000 documents, with 221 files listed as destroyed or missing. Trips identified as breaching guidelines included return travel from Copenhagen to Paris to attend the French Open tennis final in June 1993 by Danish IOC member Neils Holst-Sorensen and his wife.

Irish IOC member Kevin O'Flanagan and his brother

were also highlighted for accepting travel from Dublin to London for the 1992 Wimbledon tennis final.

The bid company paid for accommodation costs, theatre tickets and other travel costs, the report found.

The report said educational fees amounting to 7,220 dollars were paid for the daughter of Swaziland's delegate David Sibande, while employment assistance was provided to relatives of Algerian member Raouf Scally, Romanian member Alexandru Sipreco and Finnish member Peter

Tallberg. Sheridan said these instances appeared to amount to misconduct but "that cannot be determined until these members have had the opportunity to state their case."

Of Australian Olympic Committee president John Coates's last-minute funding offers totalling \$2 million to African officials on the eve of the 1993 vote for the 2000 Games, Sheridan found no breach of IOC rules, but a "contravention of the spirit of the guidelines."

"A number of aspects ... caused me some concern," he said. "But on my interpretation there does not appear to be any breach of the IOC guidelines."

Knight welcomed the report, saying the general tone was positive.

"The findings reveal Sydney's bid was not perfect but all in all it was pretty clean," he said at a press conference.

"There is no doubting that the Sydney bid has been put under the microscope like no host city other than Salt Lake City."

"But the Sheridan report shows that there is no comparison between what occurred in relation to the Salt Lake City bid and what Sydney did to win the 2000 Games."

"Now it is time to move forward and concentrate our total focus on the Games next year."

Sheridan concluded that new, workable IOC regulations were needed and that the IOC must make fundamental structural changes to increase its accountability to the Olympic movement and the public.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMMAM HIRSH
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1NT Pass 2♠ Pass
3♠ Pass 4NT Pass
5♠ Pass 6♣ Pass

Opening lead: Three of ♠

The Rule of 11 simply states: Deduct the spot of a fourth-best card led from 11, and the remainder equals the number of higher cards in that suit held by the other three hands. How does that help in the play? This deal presents a rare application of the Rule.

North's two-diamond response was a transfer to hearts. With an almost pure prime holding and using a 15-17 point range for an opening of one no trump, South judged the holding as worth a jump

to three hearts to show a maximum with good trump support, and North immediately launched into Blackwood before committing to slam.

Declarer won the opening lead in hand and cashed the ace and king of trumps to learn the bad news. An endplay was now necessary, and the club intermediates were such that declarer could get home if the missing club honors were divided.

After ruffing a diamond, declarer played off four rounds of spades, both defenders discarding a diamond on the last as declarer parted with a club. East was now thrown in with the master trump.

On the forced club return, declarer played low and captured West's jack with the king. The ten of clubs was returned for a finesse — down one.

Declarer's plan was good, but the hand should have been made. West's opening lead of the three of diamonds meant there were eight cards higher in the other three hands. Declarer and dummy accounted for only three, so East held the other five. Once East had shown up with three cards in each major, East could hold no more than two clubs. Declarer should, therefore, have abandoned spades after three rounds in favor of cashing the ace and king of clubs before throwing East in with the trump. The forced diamond return would have presented declarer with a ruff-out and a slam.

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Serbs under pressure after Kosovo Albanians accept peace deal

PARIS (R) — The big power Contact Group piled pressure on Belgrade on Monday to accept a Kosovo autonomy accord after the ethnic Albanian delegation announced it would sign the pact aimed at ending the year-long war in its homeland.

The ethnic Albanians officially backed the deal on the first day of the resumed peace talks despite a new wave of violence in the province they want to wrest from Yugoslav control.

French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine and his British counterpart Robin Cook bluntly told Yugoslavia it had little time left to sign the accord that includes the NATO-led peace-keeping force Belgrade wants to keep out of Kosovo.

"The Yugoslav representatives now have their backs to the wall... It is for them to choose," Vedrine told a news conference after meeting both delegations at a Paris conference centre.

In Washington, U.S. President Bill Clinton said NATO would have little choice but to strike if Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic failed to back the accord.

"If he shows intransigence and aggression, I think that from my point of view, we would have little option," Clinton said at a meeting with NATO Secretary General Javier Solana.

In Madrid, NATO's senior officer, General Klaus Naumann, said when asked how credible was the NATO threat: "I would suggest to everyone involved in this con-

flict to take NATO as very credible."

He said it should be clearly understood NATO would not tolerate another war in Europe. "and I hope this message is understood in Belgrade as well."

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, speaking in the name of the European Union, warned Belgrade to sign up and said: "Not signing the accord brings with it a heavy responsibility."

Naumann, asked about NATO's preparedness for action, said: "We stand ready to execute air operations against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Our air forces are all in place and also the naval forces stand ready to execute all potential operations at very short notice."

Serbian President Milan Milutinovic emerged from his first meeting with international mediators saying nothing had been finally agreed and the autonomy accord that ethnic Albanians said they were willing to sign did not actually exist.

In Yugoslavia, the army extended conscripts military service by 30 days because of "threats of military intervention," the official news agency Tanjug said.

Russia's Ambassador to France Nikolai Afanasyevsky told LCI television Moscow supported Belgrade's argument that the 28,000 peacekeepers could only be deployed with Yugoslav approval.

Cook made clear the ethnic Albanians' decision, which the Contact Group failed to win in

17 days of negotiations last month in Rambouillet, was a breakthrough that put the Yugoslav delegation under heavy pressure to sign up quickly.

"We have now taken away from the Serbian delegation their first line of defence... that leaves the Serbian side one less alibi for not signing up to this package," he said.

No deadline has been set for the Serbs to sign, but Vedrine said that if there were such a time limit, it would be short.

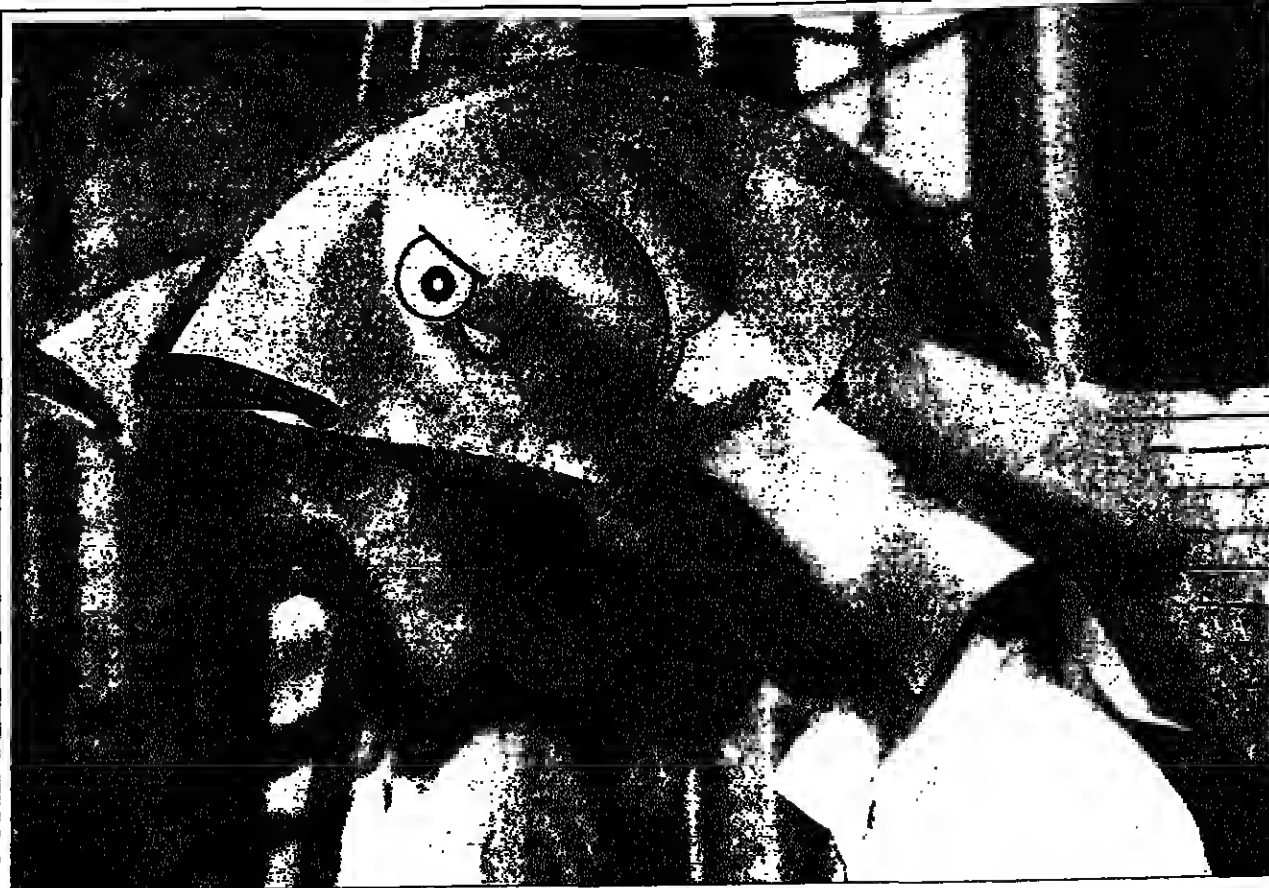
Hashim Thaqi, leader of the Kosovo Albanian delegation, told reporters: "We said 'yes' not because this is an ideal agreement for the Kosovo people but... to make way for the democratic process in Kosovo and in the Balkans and to stop the violence and genocide against the Kosovo people."

Ibrahim Rugova, the elected political leader of Kosovo, added the agreement depended on the arrival of NATO troops in Kosovo. "Just because we signed this agreement does not mean we will ever give up our aim of independence," he said.

Vedrine, who is co-chairing the talks with Cook, said the Yugoslav delegation's position had not changed so far.

Milutinovic told journalists that Belgrade's delegation had discussed only political elements of the proposed accord at a meeting with international mediators.

Asked about the Kosovo Albanians' agreement to sign the accord drafted at Rambouillet last month, he said: "What agreement? Such an agreement doesn't exist."



PROTEST AGAINST OVERFISHING: Members of the environmental group Greenpeace, wearing fish masks, stage a demonstration Monday outside the Argentine government's Agriculture, Livestock, Fishing and Food Department. The activists were demanding an end to uncontrolled fishing of hake, saying stocks are depleted and the species is at risk of extinction (Reuters photo)

'Mossad behind 1992 killing of PLO member'

PARIS (AFP) — Israel's Mossad secret service was behind the 1992 assassination in Paris of a security agent for PLO leader Yasser Arafat, a French daily reported Monday citing the results of an enquiry.

Le Figaro newspaper said the ongoing investigation had fingered Adnan Yasin, a former Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official who worked as a double agent, of being linked to the killing.

Yasin, at the time a security official in charge of organising the trips of PLO officials from Tunis, tipped off the Mossad in June 1992 that the victim, Atef

Bseiso, planned to travel to Paris.

Bseiso, 44, was gunned down on the night of June 7 in the French capital by two hit-men working for the Mossad, French investigators have determined, Le Figaro said.

"The intent was to strike on French soil in order to send a strong signal to the French secret service with whom Bseiso had close relations," Le Figaro quotes a reliable source as saying.

Israel has in the past denied any involvement in the killing. A diplomat at the Israeli embassy in Paris said: "We

have no information on the subject."

Palestinian officials here also declined comment pending final results of the probe.

According to Le Figaro, French investigators traced the murder to Yasin and the Mossad after running through the victim's schedule in the hours before his death.

They discovered that Bseiso decided to travel to Paris at the last minute and only three people knew of his whereabouts — his wife Dima, his contact at the French counter espionage service (DST) and Yasin.

The probe narrowed down in

1996 when French authorities were told that Yasin was behind bars in Tunis on charges of treason.

Yasin allegedly supplied Arafat with a chair rigged with listening devices during the secret 1993 Israeli-Palestinian talks that led to the Oslo peace accords.

When confronted with the evidence, Yasin is said to have admitted his guilt and was jailed.

French authorities, however, say they have not been able to locate him in recent months to question him on their probe concerning Bseiso murder.

Teacher sues over smoky bathroom

LIVERPOOL (AP) — Not only is smoking in the bathroom not allowed in school, it might get you sued. Gary Phillips, a math teacher at Liverpool High School, has filed a lawsuit against 11th-grader Brian Parrillo. Phillips says Parrillo was smoking in the boys' bathroom. Phillips is seeking \$57 for a doctor's visit and allergy medication he says he needed after he was exposed to the smoke. The teacher also is seeking an unspecified amount for punitive damages for pain and suffering, according to the complaint he filed in small claims court. The Parrillo family was upset when it got the news. "I don't think it's fair," said Parrillo's mother, Carol.

Bedside justice sparks debate

KINGSTON (R) — A Jamaican judge held trial at the hospital bedside of a terminally ill woman and sentenced her to three years in jail for fraud, sparking debate among Jamaica's islanders. In a special sitting of the court at the Kingston Public Hospital, Kingston Resident Magistrate Martin Gayle convicted cancer patient Jacqueline Davidson and sentenced her to two years in prison for fraudulent conversion and one year for conspiracy. The judge sat beside the sick woman's bed as several witnesses accused her of stealing their money. Legal observers described the proceedings as a unique brand of "bedside justice." "I have never heard of anything like this being done in terms of trying a person on their death bed, and I find it immoral and a human rights violation," attorney Victor Robinson told Reuters.

Station suspends chief after hoax

BONN (R) — A Berlin radio station that broadcast an interview with Chancellor Gerhard Schröder it obtained under false pretences has suspended its managing Director and apologised, a spokeswoman said Monday. Managing director Bernd von zur Muehlen of 104.6 RTL Radio was immediately suspended, but a journalist posing as German President Roman Herzog who tricked Schröder into giving the brief interview has not been disciplined. In the interview, Schröder admitted that former Finance Minister Oskar Lafontaine had refused to speak with him after submitting his written resignation Thursday. The RTL spokeswoman said the journalist had called the chancellor's pretence to be a Herzog aide. The chancellor then gave the journalist the number of Schröder's cellular phone.

Former Miss Universe wins governorship

PORTLAMAR (AFP) — Former Miss Universe Irene Saez swept the race for governor in Nueva Esparta, capturing more than 70 per cent of the votes, the regional electoral board said Sunday. The new governor attracted more than three times the number of votes that went to her main contender, Gregorio Boadas, a social democrat. Over 60 per cent of eligible voters abstained however, said the president of the electoral board, Inka Henneberg.

Dutch dogs to face aggression test

AMSTERDAM (R) — The Dutch government on Monday singled out five types of dogs which must undergo tests for aggressive traits before their owners can breed them. The test applies to American Staffordshire Terriers, Dogo Argentinos, Fila Brasileiros, Mastino Napoletanos and Rottweilers. "The test involves putting the dog in a situation where it would try to bite you. If it bites too quickly, it must be sterilised," an agriculture ministry spokeswoman said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Arafat reaffirms plan for statehood

HELSINKI (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat reaffirmed his intentions to proclaim an independent Palestinian state on May 4, in spite of international objections, Finnish news agency STT/FNB reported Monday. Arafat, who was meeting with Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, underlined that the date May 4 "is sacred for the Palestinians, and has an international legitimacy which should be respected." Arafat later met with South African President Nelson Mandela, who is also in Finland, and later left for Oslo.

Iraqi FM leaves for Arab League meet

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq's Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Sahhaf left Baghdad on Monday for Cairo to participate in an Arab League ministerial meeting due to start on Wednesday, the official INA news agency said. On the sidelines of the two-day meeting, Sahhaf "will have talks with several of his Arab counterparts focusing on developing cooperation between Iraq and Arab states," INA said. In January, Sahhaf himself walked out of an Arab League foreign ministers' meeting in Cairo that failed to condemn the U.S.-British air war on his country the previous month.

Woman held for aiding Jihad released

JENIN (AFP) — Israel has released a Palestinian woman after three weeks of intensive interrogation about her alleged ties to the armed wing of the Islamic Jihad group, Palestinian sources said Monday. Munira Qadan, 28, was freed late Sunday after waging a hunger strike throughout her three-week detention, the sources said. Qadan, a known Islamic Jihad supporter from a village near Jenin, was picked up by Israeli security forces on suspicion of providing logistical support to the armed wing of the fundamentalist group, they said. She recounted after her release that Israeli agents interrogated her intensively, sometimes hanging her by her wrists for hours with a heavy sack over her head in order to obtain a confession.

PNA regrets detaining journalists

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The Palestinian National Authority apologised on Monday for the detention last week of journalists covering riots in the Gaza Strip. Police held six journalists, three of them from Reuters, for three hours in the southern Gaza town of Rafah last Thursday and confiscated their film material. Mohammad Suleiman, director general of the Palestinian information ministry, said the detentions reflected police inexperience in dealing with the media "in an emergency situation" and expressed deep regret.

Hizbollah chief says U.S. the 'enemy'

BEIRUT (AFP) — Hizbollah chief Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah said Monday that the United States was the "real enemy" of the Shiite Muslim militia, which is waging an armed campaign to drive Israeli troops out of southern Lebanon. "The American administration is our real enemy because it is the one that began the aggression against people in the [Middle East] region," Nasrallah told the weekly magazine Al Wasat. "The successive American administrations were responsible every time a drop of blood was spilled in southern Lebanon, a house was destroyed there or a tree burnt" by Israeli bombardments, he said. Nasrallah also said that Katyusha rocket attacks on northern Israel should be carried out only by Hizbollah, although other groups have similar weapons.

Death penalty sought for Erbakan allies

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's State Security Court called Monday for death penalties against four allies of former Islamist Premier Necmettin Erbakan for attempting to overthrow the government. The Anatolia news agency reported. The court is bringing action against the four former deputies of Erbakan's now-disbanded Welfare (Refah) Party for "attempting to overthrow the constitutional government and replace it with a regime based on religious principles." Erbakan is already at the centre of a legal battle in which he himself is accused of seeking to oust the government, with the death penalty also sought against him.

Israel holding Palestinian corpses 'captive' — report

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel is systematically refusing to return the corpses of slain Palestinian militants and currently holds 24 bodies collected since 1994, Israeli human rights groups said on Monday.

In a report titled "Captive Corpses," the groups B'tselem and Hamoked said Israeli authorities adopted the policy four years ago as "collective punishment and vengeance against the families of the dead."

The report listed the names of 24 Palestinians, primarily members of radical Islamist groups, who were killed since 1994 in clashes with the Israeli army or in suicide attacks in Israel and whose bodies have been withheld from their families.

The list included the brothers Imad and Adel Awadallah, senior figures in Hamas who were killed by Israeli commandos in September.

B'tselem director Eitan Felner said that prior to 1994, Israel occasionally withheld the bodies of Palestinians slain during military actions in the occupied territories or along Israel's borders.

But the policy was not systematic and apparently depended on decisions of individual commanders or the circumstances surrounding the militants' deaths.

The army altered its policy after the Islamist groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad launched a campaign of murderous suicide bombings in 1994, Felner said during a press conference to release the groups' report.

"Since 1994, there has been a clear and consistent policy not to return these bodies," he said.

According to the report, the new Israeli policy was motivated in part by the desire of security forces to avoid funerals for the militants which could inflame passions and spark unrest.

In some instances, Israel has also held bodies for possible exchange for kidnapped or murdered soldiers.

But the report said the primary aim appeared to be a collective punishment of the dead militants' families designed to discourage future attacks.

In the same vein the army systematically demolishes the family homes of suicide bombers.

"Someone who committed suicide or was killed by the

defence forces cannot be brought to trial, but the wish to repay and revenge remains strong," the report said.

The groups said the policy violates international humanitarian law in general and specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which Israel is a signatory and which stipulates that "no protected person may be punished for an offence he or she has not personally committed."

The policy also amounts to psychological abuse of the bereaved families "and violates the Palestinians' religious beliefs and customs dealing with deaths in the family," they said.

"Hamoked and B'tselem urge the Israeli government to return to the families the bodies of their loved ones without any

consideration for the severity of the acts attributed to those killed," they said.

The groups also catalogued instances in which Palestinian corpses were buried in a "negligent and shameful manner" in so-called "cemeteries of the enemy dead" located in northern Israel and the Jordan Valley.

In several cases followed up by B'tselem and Hamoked, military authorities were unable to find or identify the bodies of Palestinians buried by the army.

In response to the report, the army issued a statement asserting that its policy concerning "the bodies of terrorists complies with Israeli and international law."

But it said that the policy regarding the return of bodies "is currently under review at the highest level of the army."

Five moderates barred from Tehran council — paper

TEHRAN (AFP) — The election of five moderates to the Tehran municipal council has been annulled, a newspaper said Monday, as Iran's conservatives stepped up the pressure to overturn the sweeping victory by reformers in last month's elections.

Former Interior Minister Abdullah Nouri and four other backers of reformist President Mohammad Khatami will not be allowed to take their seats on the council by orders of the conservative-dominated Supervision Board, the pro-government newspaper Sobhe-Emrouz said.

It said Nouri, one of Iran's several vice presidents, as well as Ahmad Hakimi-Pour and Mohammad Atrianfar had been disqualified because they had not resigned from their official posts before standing as candidates.

The election of Sobhe-Emrouz director and former Deputy Intelligence Minister Said Hajarian was annulled due to the "ambiguous nature" of his written commitment to the constitutional principle of the supreme rule of the nation's spiritual leader.

Ebrahim Asgharzadeh, a leader among the radical 1979 hostage-takers at the U.S. embassy in Tehran, was dis-

qualified because of his judicial record with a revolutionary court, the paper said.

The Supervision Board, under control of parliamentary conservatives, had threatened to bar the men ahead of the Feb. 26 elections but they were allowed to stand after last-minute intervention by Khatami.

Conservative efforts to overturn the election results began in earnest last week when influential MP Ahmad Rasoolinejad called for the impeachment of Interior Minister Abdol-Vahed Mousavi-Lari over his ministry's handling of the elections.

Rasoolinejad said there had been "thousands of complaints" filed with election authorities about the polling, which he said was rife with illegalities.

Mousavi-Lari had earlier raised the ire of conservatives by saying that the new municipal officials elected across the country will provide "strong support" for Khatami's reformist government.

The results of the vote "paved the way for popular participation in the administration of the society's affairs," he said.

Khatami supporters swept all 15 of the municipal council seats at stake in Tehran and scored impressive wins in the provinces.

PKK threatens tourists in Turkey

ISTANBUL (AFP) — The separatist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) on Monday took aim at Turkey's tourism industry, a vital money-maker for the country, warning foreigners would no longer be safe in Turkish resorts.

"All of Turkey is a war zone now. This includes the Turkish republic's tourist regions," the PKK's armed wing, the Kurdistan People's Liberation Army (ARPK), said in a statement distributed by the pro-Kurdish news agency DEM.

"For the sake of their security it is necessary that no tourists come to Turkey, that the states warn their citizens and that tourism companies make no such bookings," the statement said.

Six people were killed and more than 60 injured in that bombing campaign, which lasted from 1993 to 1995 and targeted resort towns on Turkey's Aegean and Mediterranean coasts as well as Istanbul.

The bombings followed similar warnings by the ARPK at the time.

Abdullah Ocalan's brother Osman Ocalan, an ARPK commander, recently told a German weekly that the PKK would become "a fireball aimed at the enemy", but that it would "not kill tourists."

The PKK earlier this month announced it would "intensify the war" against Turkey and called for a "victory offensive that recognises no rules."

They can be held for seven days without charges under terrorism laws.

All three were in Abu Hamza's apartment at the time of the police swoop, a source close to London-based activists said.

Police said that about 30 officers were involved in raids and that "we are currently conducting a number of searches at home addresses in the west London area."

Yemen accused Abu Hamza, who is partly blinded and lost a hand in what he says was a landmine explosion in Afghanistan, of sending a group of eight British Muslims and

two Algerians to Yemen to carry out a series of attacks against British and American targets.

Those 10 suspects — who include Abu Hamza's son and son-in-law — are currently on trial in the southern port city of Aden.

The Yemeni government said last week that it was in contact with London over its demand for the extradition of the London-based cleric.

However, a police source said that London had not yet received a formal request for extradition, and legal experts underlined that the two countries have no extradition accord.

Islamist cleric wanted in Yemen arrested

LONDON (AFP) — British police arrested Monday Sheikh Abu Hamza, a London-based Islamist cleric who is wanted on terrorism charges in Yemen.

The Egyptian-born Briton, accused by Yemen of links to terrorist attacks there, was seized in a dawn raid and arrested under Britain's Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Police said that anti-terrorism branch officers also arrested two other men in coordinated raids at a number of places in west London.

The arrested men were aged 36, 39 and 40 and were being held at a central London police station, the spokesman said.